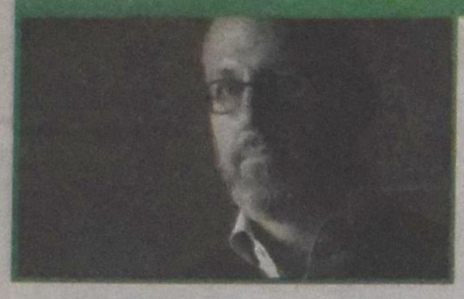

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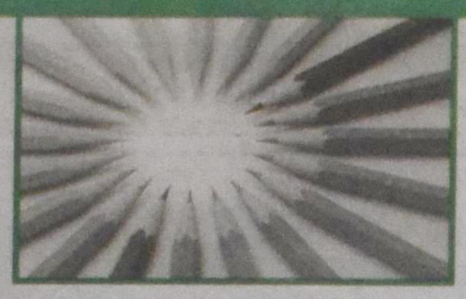

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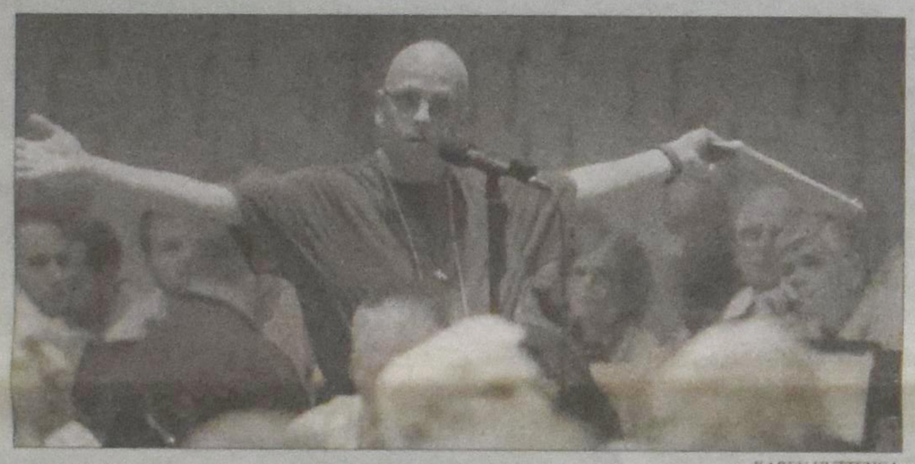
A generation's defining struggle



KAREN HUTTENGA

Elder Bowman of Toronto tells Synod he's openly gay and "no longer willing to be silent."

June 13 – the seventh day of Synod – and the discussion was dragging on. Should the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) revisit its 1973 position (reconfirmed in 2002), which asserts that homosexual activity is a sin but orientation is not? Does new scholarship on sexuality and psychology challenge the traditional viewpoint? Are our churches hospitable to gay Christians and open to some tension on these issues? With younger delegates calling this "the woman-in-office issue for my generation" and older reps declaring that to depart from the current policy would force them to leave the CRC, it's clear that Synod's conversation was only part of a larger discussion – one that defines our time. At times it feels like we're at an impasse.

But that day at Synod, Joseph Bowman, an elder from Classis Toronto, extemporaneously addressed the floor.

"I stand before you as a 40-year-old, single, celibate and chaste yet openly gay man . . . no longer willing to be silent," he said. Twenty years in therapy did nothing to change his sexual orientation, he explained. He was excommunicated from another church, and thanked "this denomination for being affirming of somebody like me." He was given a standing ovation.

When delegates voted, the majority agreed to appoint a study committee that will examine how to lovingly communicate (not re-examine) the CRC's position on homosexuality. Pastors admit that cultural shifts have made the process of ministering to gay people more challenging.

"I am grateful that the Synod of the CRC has moved ahead with the shepherding model for a study committee to engage matters of pastoral care in light of the changing cultural, political and social landscape," says Wendy Gritter, member of the newly appointed study committee.

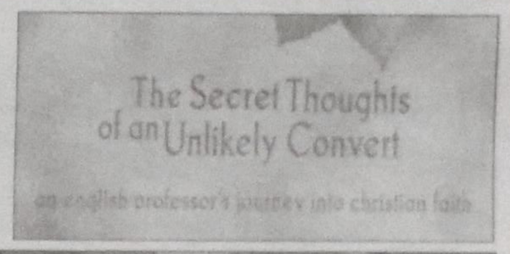
Her focus? To be "committed to listening deeply to the realities in our local churches and to nurturing conversation that will enlarge our wisdom, discernment and loving response to the real people impacted by the complex matters surrounding our sexuality."

The study committee will report to Synod in 2016.

– Angela Reitsma Bick

Disrupted by Christ

The insights of a postmodern professor's conversion



Roxanne Van Farowe

Facing a list of potential books to review, I was intrigued by this summary: "Crazy true story of a former lesbian, now Christian. She read the Bible. Period. That changed her." The book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: an English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*, was soon on my bedside table. It was an insightful and fascinating read.

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield was a feminist English professor living in Syracuse, New York with her female partner in the late 1990s. She was doing research on the religious right that led her to publish a scathing article about Promise Keepers (a Christian ministry to men) in the local newspaper.

In response to her article, a local pastor wrote her a letter, not negative or positive, just asking questions that challenged her deeply. She couldn't bring herself to throw away the letter, and she ended up accepting his invitation to meet in person at his home. She was surprised at how much she had in common with the pastor and his wife. The most memorable part was his opening prayer: "not a pretentious prayer uttered for the heathen at the table to overhear," but genuine; she "had never heard anyone pray to God as if God care, as if God listened, as if God answered." That first dinner led to what became a close friendship. Meanwhile, Rosaria was reading the Bible five hours a day for her research work. She became more and more convicted that her lifestyle was wrong, and finally she had a "train wreck conversion" that ripped apart her whole way of life.

"Everyone must give up something to follow Jesus," Butterfield says.

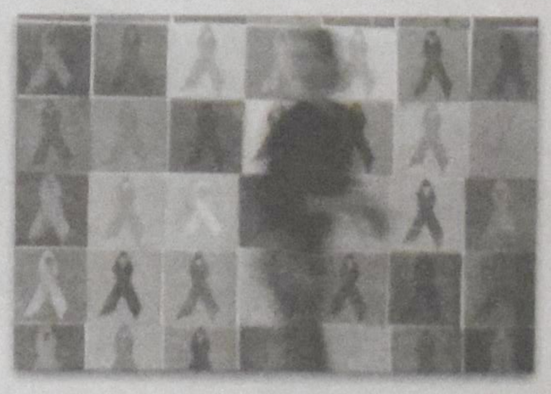
The book goes on to describe how Rosaria dealt with the fallout of her conversion. She gave a lecture at her college that was like a coming out of the closet as a Christian. She became engaged to a man who was

See ***Disrupted by Christ*** *on page 2*

Do we need conversations around homosexuality?

Paul Verhoef

As a pastor working at a public University, I get into a pile of conversations concerning homosexuality and the LGBT* community. One of my lesbian colleagues is offended when I say that our church distinguishes between sexual orientation and acting on it. She says I'm splitting her identity. Is this separation legitimate? Another time, a student told me that Christians say they "love the sinner and hate the sin." But he wonders if our churches make that distinction believable. He says that Christians seem to either include or exclude – and nothing in between. And what about justice concerns? How should committed relationships between two people be honoured by the law, no matter what the couple's gender?



Churches can do justice by joining local AIDS walks.

With all these conversations at the University, I was surprised when I read that 14 years ago, most

See ***Conversations*** *on page 6*

News

Disrupted by Christ *continued from page 1*

also leaving the homosexual lifestyle, and she took a leave of absence from her job, only to later break off the engagement.

The narrow way

The best thing about this book is that it gives you an insider's perspective on two very different worlds – given by someone who has not only lived in both, but actually crossed from one to the other. Rosaria does not see homosexuality as a sin in a special category, but simply a wrong way of living that a person must give up in order to follow Jesus. Everyone must give up something, she says, and that hurts. She describes asking women in her new church what they gave up, and coming away with an understanding that she was not alone in her sacrifice. Later she describes uncomfortable moments when people within the church showed their lack of hospitality to people like she used to be.

Today Butterfield is a pastor's wife and homeschools the two children they have at home (they have adopted four.) And her family recently moved to the city where I live – Durham, North Carolina. After *CC's* editor sent an introductory letter, I was able to email Rosaria and set up an interview in person.

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert was written without any idea of the attention it would receive, Rosaria told me in that interview. She believed her audience would be small and likeminded, mostly members of her denomination, the Reformed Presbyterian Church. But once it was "discovered," the book went into multiple printings. In January of this year Butterfield did an interview with the editor of *World* magazine that has had over 54,000 hits on YouTube. Her speaking schedule is booked to 2015.

I was excited to meet Rosaria, having just read her book. She invited me to her church's prayer meeting.

Real life

I arrived at her church on a hot May evening and was the first one there. After a few minutes, the Butterfields arrived with warm greetings and unlocked the door.

We walked into a church fellowship hall with tables set up for a meal. One other woman and Rosaria bustled around in the kitchen for a few minutes. I talked to Rosaria's 8-year-old son, who showed me his notebook, which was full of pictures of birds that he had drawn by looking at pictures in various guidebooks – some were extinct – I remember discussing the auk and the Carolina parakeet.

Dinner was a potluck and I sat across from Rosaria. There were only nine of us – one key family in the church was away, I was told. I heard about how Rosaria's life has become incredibly hectic because of her book: "I'm in this new world. I don't know what's going on."

The prayer meeting began with singing psalms from a psalm book. The Reformed Presbyterians believe that only psalms (not hymns) should be sung in worship, a capella, as Rosaria describes in her book. Kent Butterfield expounded on a psalm and then we prayed. One request was for Rosaria, in her new busyness.

After prayer, Rosaria went to the sanctuary for an exclusive interview with *Christian Courier* (see below).

In it, Butterfield advises us – Christians in North America in 2013 – to be image bearers and to cultivate godliness. Our culture increasingly rejects norms for right and wrong behaviour. Rosaria Butterfield's words encouraged me to open my Bible with a renewed expectation to find applicable truth – and also to open my hands and my heart to my neighbours.

Roxanne Van Farowe lives with her husband, James, and their five children in Durham, North Carolina.

Winnipeg Christians say 'I'm Sorry' to gay community

John Longhurst

"I'm sorry."

That's what a group of Winnipeg Christians said from the sidelines on June 2 during that city's annual Gay Pride Parade.

"Christians have caused a great deal of harm and alienation for people in the LGBT community," says Jamie Arpin-Ricci, pastor of Winnipeg's Little Flowers Church and organizer of the Winnipeg I'm Sorry campaign.

"As Christians we have done wrong, and we want to say sorry," he says of how he and about two dozen others from several churches stood alongisde the parade route holding signs that said "Please forgive me for using the Bible as a weapon," "I'm sorry the church hurt you," and "We are all beautiful in God's eyes."

"This is one way of making an unqualified apology and publically committing ourselves to do better," he adds.

The Winnipeg I'm Sorry event is part of an international I'm Sorry movement started by the Marin Foundation of Chicago, a non-profit group that works to build bridges between the LGBT community and the church.

Christians who participate in the Foundation's I'm Sorry campaign take the "I'm Sorry pledge," committing themselves to "listening to the stories of others and seeking to understand," striving to "make things better for the LBGT community," and affirming "God's love for everyone."

Since starting at Chicago's Gay Pride Parade in 2010, the I'm Sorry campaign has expanded to Pride Parades in 20 other cities in the U.S., England, Scotland, Guatemala and Canada; the Winnipeg I'm Sorry campaign is the only one in this country. This year is the second year it's been held.

A member of the gay pride parade hugs a Christian (in black, "I'm sorry" shirt).

Response to the campaign "is humbling," says Arpin-Ricci, citing an e-mail received after this year's event.

"Thank you for being there at Pride this year," the anonymous writer said. "I had heard about the movement and had read about it in the news, but I did not at all expect my reaction when I saw you on the sidelines during the march. I read your signs and was hit by tremendous emotion and was moved to tears at the reality of it as I marched by.

"The power of an apology is amazing, and even though I don't think I have met any of you personally, your presence and willingness to apologize for a history that you have inherited was truly appreciated."

As he looks back at this year's I'm Sorry campaign, Arpin-Ricci acknowledges that not all Christians would support their effort. But, he says, even those who believe homosexuality is a sin could still agree that the church has treated gay people badly over the centuries – including "demonizing people's character and intentions."

Plus, he adds, the I'm Sorry campaign isn't about expressing a theological stance on homosexuality. "More than anything, all we want to do is show love and respect for all people, regardless of orientation, as Christ would love them."

For Jonathan Niemczak, President of the Pride Winnipeg Festival, the I'm Sorry campaign was a welcome addition to the event.

John Longhurst lives in Winnipeg, and attends a Mennonite Brethren church.

Interview with an unlikely convert

Roxanne Van Farowe

What was your purpose in writing your book?

Butterfield in conversation with CC.

I wrote it for my children. As life goes on, it's easy to forget the details of repentance, like pebbles in the water that get washed and dulled over time. I wanted to capture the inner landscape of the Christian life. I wanted my children to have a sense of my journey. I saw it as a local conversation.

What advice do you have for those of us who have friends and relatives who have come out as lesbian or gay?

Homosexuality is a sin and so is homophobia. You shouldn't target your homosexual friends. Don't see that as a unique sin. It just means their hearts are hardened to the Lord, and they need to know the Lord.

I liked it when you said in your book that we all have something that we need to give up.

That's right. And God is able, but not obligated, to change people's sexual orientation. *[Note: Rosaria told me earlier that she does not support reparative therapy.]*

[Homosexuals] need churches where people can be respected as single people and where other people are not always trying to marry them off.

Also, homoerotic behaviour has been mainstreamed in the Christian community. At Christian colleges, it's common for men to have little rituals such as playing naked flag football.

Hmm, I never would have thought of it that way. . . .

When I'm lecturing at these colleges, I see Christian girls with their hands all over each other. . . . We shouldn't have these little rituals in the Christian community. We have to remember that one person's liberty is another person's trial.

Also, don't see marriage as a rite of passage. It's common at Christian colleges to have a flurry of engagements just before graduation. If we look at Genesis, we see that marriage is a creation ordinance. Creation ordinances are cosmological and we should not cheapen marriage by treating it as a rite of passage.

The denomination I grew up in, the Christian Reformed Church, has a policy statement about homosexuality, yet the homosexuality issue is looking to be the next big divisive issue in our denomination. What advice do you have for us?

I don't see how we can get around the

Postmodernism pushes against anything that is normative.

Bible's admonitions that homosexuality is a sin. The question is why – if I think about the lesbian couple next door who have been together for years and do so much good in the community – how is their relationship hurting me? Postmodernism pushes against anything that is normative. The only argument you have in scripture comes from Genesis 2 and the creation account – God made Eve as the complement to Adam. God in his perfect

CC writer wins two awards

Cathy Smith of Wyoming, Ont., *Christian Courier*'s Features Editor as well as columnist since 2010, won recognition for her excellent writing on June 12 at the Word Awards in Mississauga, Ont. Smith took top honours in two categories, "Article – Review" and "Article – Single Column," for her review of Hugh Cook's *Heron River* (Feb. 13, 2012) and her column last autumn entitled "God in my garden" (Sept. 24, 2012). Both articles are available on our website **(christiancourier.ca)** under Archives.

The Word Awards are presented by the Word Guild, an organization that connects, develops and promotes Canadian writers who are Christian. This year over 30 awards were given for work published in 2012, from books to articles in publications as diverse as *Christianity Today* and *The Anglican Journal*. *Christian Courier* was well represented at the Awards ceremony, with both Lloyd Rang and Angela Reitsma Bick having served as judges. Reitsma Bick was also a finalist and a presenter.

Interview with an unlikely convert *continued from page 2*

imagination wants there always to be an image of Christ in the church in a physical way. This is important because he wants us to see that he had an idea of what humanity would look like and how it would reflect the image of God. Homosexuality rejects the image of God. We have an obligation as image-bearers to bear the image of God.

I don't think God intended for this argument to be unhinged from the Bible. Arguments for how we should live should never be divided from the Bible.

How should our churches engage a postmodern culture?

The link is hospitality. Christians are called to be hospitable. Are you familiar with the book *The Art of Neighboring*? The idea is that the gospel is shared and discipleship is done heart on heart, hand on hand.

. . . All sin does is prove that God is right. There are predatory sins – the sins of Cain – that have to be taken by the neck. When someone who has been cultivating a sin says "I can't do it, I can't stop sinning," I believe them. You have to cultivate godliness. The church has to be about that.

What will you do next – what are your plans?

I am working on two books – one on outrageous hospitality, and the second on biblical sexuality and how to deal with sexual sin in your life as a believer in the way God has commanded. The church has been silent on the subject. The book will condense the counseling that I'm doing.

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Ought. Is. Could.

In early June, Prime Minister Harper became the first Canadian Prime Minister to address British Parliament in 70 years. It was a remarkable, historic occasion.

The speech he gave, however, was an epic snorefest.

I worked as speechwriter for three different Ontario Premiers, and in my professional judgment, our Prime Minister's speech about rewarding "those who work hard and play by the rules" was a cliché-ridden position paper on fiscal austerity that could have been better delivered in an Economics 101 class than on the floor of Westminster. I've seen sandpaper not half as dry work twice as well.

But it's hard to fault the PM.

Do any current world leaders inspire?

So much of what some leaders say is crafted to be broad, careful and bland. Harper may have wanted to deliver a perspective on leadership and modern statehood that was a bit more inspiring and less simple-minded than "In the absence of solvency, relevancy will also disappear," but the PM stuck to the notes he was given by his staff. And they were dreadful.

But the whole encounter got me thinking about leadership – and how different ways of looking at the world translate into different leadership styles.

I think, broadly speaking, there are three ways of looking at the world.

First, you have the "Oughts." If an Ought gets a speeding ticket, they're likely to argue that the speed limit for the area is too low, rather than dealing with the ticket they have in their hand. They'll march up any hill, on principle, saying: "This isn't right. It OUGHT to be this way."

I like "Oughts." Oughts are traditionalists – people who remember the world a certain way and want to go back to the old ways of doing things. But Oughts can also be liberal-minded poets and moral philosophers. Oughts of all stripes, though, are people with a clear sense of what is right, or how things should be.

Some of you may remember my Dad's column in this paper from the 1980s. It was called "Skylights." Often, when I'm looking for inspiration for my own writing, I re-read his work. And as I read my dad's writing, with fresh eyes, I realize he was definitely an Ought. My dad had a keen sense of the way things ought to be, and he was forever railing against change – in manners, or ethics, or spirituality.

We need Oughts. They're society's moral compass and conscience. But living that way can be really exhausting. Keeping a finger in the air and wagging it takes an enormous amount of energy, for one. And for two, it's a losing battle. Change is constant, and inevitable. Take the legendary story of King Canute, for example, who believed the tide ought to obey him and sat on the beach trying to hold it back. In the end, all he got for his trouble was a wet robe.

Here and now

Second, you have the "Is" types.

Is-people are the folks who look out at the world and see, very clearly, what is happening right now. They're realists, pragmatists, hard-bitten types. They don't get sentimental about the way things were. They're living in the moment – keenly aware of everything going on around them, but not so good, maybe, at looking ahead.

Give an Is-person a speeding ticket, and they'll confess to the crime right away, and ask where to pay for it so they can go on to the next thing. Is-people are in a hurry.

Is-types don't get caught up in questions of morality. They see people as both noble and fallen, touched by grace and filled with depravity – and they do their best to work with that. So, Is-types make for decent teachers, or managers, or business people.

I'm definitely an "is." I daresay so is Prime Minister Harper. From us you get pretty good insights into why things are the way they are, but not a lot of vision for the future. We is-types are long on observation, and short on creativity.

Forward

Then, there are the "coulds."

Coulds bring it all together. They're the ones with a clear sense of the values and the history that has brought us to where we are, today. They're not wistful about the past – yet they do understand its importance.

They also have a good sense of what is – able to look out at the world, and read the current, and understand the forces at work.

In other words, give a Could a speeding ticket and they will thank you for the opportunity to learn, and grow, and change.

Coulds take "Ought" and "Is" that one step further – they imagine where we could go, next. And more often than not, they bring us there.

Coulds are the philosophers, inventors, the leaders that keep us moving forward.

Coulds inspire.

A Could would have stepped up to the microphone at Westminster and spoken eloquently and elegantly about the challenges facing modern democracies, about the rich tradition and heritage of the Westminster system of government, and laid out a stirring course for the future.

President Obama began his political career as a Could. Think about how often, in his speeches, he would talk about the values Americans shared, where things had gone wrong and how they could be fixed.

For my money, the only other President who has spoken so brilliantly and clearly about the future has been John F. Kennedy.

In his second term, though, the realities of the global economy, the weight of office, the peculiarities of the U.S. legislative system and the waning global influence of the U.S. are turning Obama's "Yes, we can" into "I guess we tried."

And that's too bad.

Yes, Coulds are dangerous. But leaders who are Coulds are what we need.

As is-people and ought-people, we will find all the reasons in the world to go backwards, or not change, or fail to look ahead. We can do that on our own.

We need leaders who inspire, and who help us aspire to something more. We need leaders who lift us up – beyond the mundane minutia of balance sheets and the day-to-day realities of the global economy.

We need someone willing to sit high atop the crow's nest, look out over the distant horizon, take stock of the ship below, and say: "I know where we could go next."

Lloyd Rang lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

Editorials

Zombies

Michael Buma

I'm a fan of zombies. I like to watch zombie movies and TV shows, and from time to time I'll read a zombie book such as *World War Z* or *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. This is mainly a matter of pride, but I would like to state clearly from the outset that I am an early adopter of this cultural phenomenon. I liked zombies before the hipsters got a hold of them and it became fashionable to like zombies. I don't know if this gives me any extra credibility on the subject, but I did want to get that out there for the record.

My wife doesn't understand the appeal of zombies. For her, they are terrifying and repellant. She can't even make it through zombie comedies / genre homages such as *Zombieland* or *Shaun of the Dead*, which are relatively high on laughs and low on gross-out fare. To be honest, I don't like the blood and guts either. But I'm willing to endure it to get to the interesting issues and subtexts that zombie stories tend to raise.

To begin, zombies are the quintessential 20th century monster. Their endless drive for consumption is a comment on modern consumer society, in which we're encouraged to shop interminably and without satiety (it's no coincidence that in *Dawn of the Dead* and the *Dead Rising* video games, zombies end up at the mall). This is also why zombies famously crave brains: as the Frankfurt School of cultural theory tells it, mass culture takes away our intellectual agency so that we will become mindless consumers.

Zombies carry a whole host of interesting subtexts.

But zombies carry a whole host of other interesting subtexts. George Romero's pioneering zombie films tap into Cold War cultural anxieties and tensions surrounding American race-relations, while subsequent entries in the genre probe anxieties surrounding post-humanism, the threat of global pandemics and the breakdown of the nuclear family. In fact, the two zombie comedies mentioned above arguably attempt to reinstate the nuclear family as a stabilizing force in a world that they see as ravaged more by postmodern slacker cynicism than zombies. There's a great scene in *Zombieland* where Woody Harrelson's character, completely unable to articulate his sense of familial affection for another character, resorts to a reference to the film *Babe* – "that'll do, pig" – as a comically pathetic and obsequiously postmodern attempt to say farewell and force his feelings into words.

Post-apocalyptic parenting

The theme of family and parenting is what's struck me most about a recent zombie text I've been watching, the third season of *The Walking Dead* (a television show based on a comic book series of the same name). What's pulled me in about that season is its moving treatment of parenting in a world in which social order has basically broken down. Without giving too much away, a father – whose role as protector and provider in the show extends to a group of people beyond his own family – is forced to ponder an incredibly difficult moral question: is his son's life more valuable than the lives of others? Does his love and duty to safeguard his son's wellbeing trump his obligations to other people and to right action in general?

Such questions are never easy, and confront most parents in relatively benign ways. Surely it's the other kid's fault when there's an altercation at daycare. Maybe the teacher is to blame when a bad mark comes home from school. Shouldn't my kid get the most playing time on the soccer team? *The Walking Dead* takes these sorts of questions and contrives a situation in which they are played out at the most extreme edge of human love, emotion and frailty. As the father of two young boys it makes me wonder what I'd be capable of doing to protect my children, and it forces me to ponder at what point the intensity of parental love might begin to brush up against idolatry.

Another way of saying this is that *The Walking Dead* poses a sort of Abraham and Isaac dilemma. Is it best to choose right moral action (in Abraham's case an explicit directive from God to sacrifice his son), or does love for our children trump every other consideration? It's a lesson in faithfulness and conviction, and fortunately for Isaac the Lord doesn't require Abraham to follow through. This seeming tension between God's demand for our unwavering allegiance and his mercy for us as weak and fallible creatures is carried forward to the New Testament in the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13: "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

Like most good zombie dramas, *The Walking Dead* is more about human evil than the monstrous "other." One aspect of the show's effectiveness, at least in the third season, is its willingness to make the counterintuitive and unorthodox-sounding suggestion that our love for the people closest to us must be properly balanced with compassion and consideration for even the most undeserving others. Fortunately we serve a God who by unfathomable grace and mercy was able to make this inconceivable moral calculus in our favour. In the familiar words of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son. . . ."

Michael Buma is a CC Contributing Editor. He was overwhelmed by the many kind responses he received from CC readers regarding his April 2012 editorial on the plight of young PhDs working in contingent faculty roles. By way of a quick update to that story, Michael has moved on from university teaching and is now working as a Consulting Analyst at a London and Toronto-based Information Technology research firm.

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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The case for dystopian fiction

Angela Reitsma Bick

When Edward Snowden leaked the details of a domestic surveillance program run by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), several things happened online. Traffic skyrocketed on an obscure, private search engine called DuckDuckGo as internet users tried to sidestep Google's data-tracking systems. Encryption software also enjoyed sudden popularity as spooked users wanted to scramble personal cell phone and email messages. And – most intriguing – online sales spiked for George Orwell's famous novel, *1984*.

Why the sudden urge to read an old book about electronic government surveillance after finding out that we are currently being monitored electronically by the government? For pleasure? Rebel inspiration? Grim, *I-told-you-so* satisfaction?

Jarred by current events, we turn to fiction like 1984 *for insight.*

No. It's simply great literature, with a relevance that has endured from 1949 into 2013. Grade 10 English teachers are not surprised by the fresh popularity of this classic. Fiction has always been the best spot to explore life's toughest questions, and when real life jars us we ask all the more earnestly: "Who am I? What is freedom? What is love? *What is my worst nightmare*?"

Orwell's *1984* illustrates a typical dystopia – literally, counter-utopia. His Big Brother, the original, is the poster boy for an elite ruling party that ruthlessly monitors and suppresses individuals down to the level of thought. The worlds in dystopian novels are repressive and not by accident. Whether or not the apocalypse has occurred (courtesy of zombies, viruses, meteors or aliens), the dystopian society is an imaginary place where humans suffer at the hands of other humans.

A history of dystopian literature is a history of what scares us. Thus Cold-War era fiction predicted a variety of post-nuclear landscapes, while today's books are more likely to envisage environmental degradation and the privations that may follow. But a single generation doesn't hold the copyright on certain terrors. In 1826, Mary Shelley described a plague that kills nearly everyone on earth in "The Last Man," a scenario recycled via virus in *Children of Men* (1992). The same bullying and peer murder that occurs in *The Hunger Games* (2008) also characterizes *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *Ender's Game* (1985).

Of course today's worst-case scenarios have a few new twists: there are more female heroines (cue the romance) and more focus on invasive technologies such as computer chip implants or forced pharmaceuticals. And, significantly, there's less humour these days, as Philip Reeve points out. Apparently the future is a pretty grim place. Without the satire of a modern Kurt Vonnegut or Douglas Adams, "the end of the world is just no *fun* anymore," Reeve complains (*School Library Journal*, August 2011).

Spooked or armed?

I grew up on dystopian fiction, from *Brave New World* to *Day of the Triffids*. Before Lois Lowry wrote *The Giver* in 1985, there weren't many end-of-the-world books for kids. Now Young Adult is a genre in its own right, and dystopian fiction hogs a lot of shelf space. Three samples: in Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking* trilogy, an infection makes men's thoughts audible. Oil has run out in Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker*, forcing child slaves to scavenge it out of abandoned super-tankers. Veronica Roth's *Divergent* describes a dystopian Chicago where teens must choose which one of five virtues will define

Letters

A short defense of tolerance

Two years ago CBC reran a program titled "Tolerance: Canadian Voices" in which Nahlah Ayed asked Canadians to explain what tolerance meant to them. Almost everyone she spoke with hated tolerance. Tolerance, explained people with east Indian accents, with French accents, with west African accents and with Dutch accents, means that we aren't really welcome. To tolerate us is to demean us. We don't want to be tolerated, they said. We want to be accepted, appreciated, admired and loved. Lloyd Rang may have heard the CBC program, too. He echoed this modern Canadian view of tolerance when he wrote "Tolerance is about holding the other person away from you as the 'other.' Love, on the other hand, means you must develop a relationship with the other – as equal partners" ("Love in the time of tolerance," May 13, 2013).

Words change meaning and it is clear that for many Canadians – like Lloyd Rang –"tolerance" has taken on a belittling and negative connotation. But, I wonder, do we have a good replacement for the word? Tolerance was never meant to be the replacement for love but as an occasional *result* of love. (Rang asked *CC*'s readers to imagine murmuring "I tolerate you" to a dear one during a candlelight dinner. He sensibly posited that a slap on the face would be the response.) My husband *tolerates* my reading in bed when he is trying to sleep *because* he loves me. I *tolerate* music in my church with sentimental words and bland tunes because I love the people who like this music. I am grateful that now and then they t*olerate* the rougher edged songs or the Louis Bourgeois hymns I prefer.

Parents are asking their older kids *to* be loving to their younger sibs *by being tolerant* when they say things like "Just sit through one episode of *Dora* with Livy – she loves it so." They are also asking them to *tolerate* their younger sib's preferences. Tolerance is what the Apostle Paul is talking about when he writes to the church in Colossea (Col. 3:13): "Bear with each other. . . ." Put up with other people's preferences and personal tics.

I'm afraid that the word "tolerant" is now damaged beyond reclamation. But the *idea* is still good. And Christ-like and counter-cultural: bear with (tolerate) behaviours and choices in one another that bug you: those who love kimchi or the Montreal Canadiens, children who run crazily through the post-church coffee time or seniors who drive below the speed limit. Bear with one another in love (Eph 4:2).

Virginia Lettinga
Prince George, B.C.

New position:
Social Media Intern

Christian Courier is now accepting applications for a new, six-month internship as our Social Media Manager. This position would take approximately five hours a week, and will build valuable experience for your resume. The successful candidate will be familiar with *CC*'s vision and subscriber base. You will be responsible for updating our social media sites and for working with the editors and staff to expand *CC*'s online presence.
An honorarium is included.

Where's the wonder?

Witvoet writes in "Where's the sun?" (May 27, 2013) that dwindling church attendance is inevitable due to secularism, a culture without God that declares itself autonomous. People see no need for God. Witvoet then makes some suggestions, all of which are good. I would add this – that we need to capture a sense of wonder, a deeper awareness of the wonder of existence.

Peter Kreeft writes: "If we are typically modern, we are bored, jaded, cynical, flat and burnt out. When the skies roll back like a scroll and the angelic trump sounds, many will simply yawn and say, 'Pretty good special effects, but the plot's too traditional.'

"Here we are in the most fantastic fun and games factory ever invented – modern technological society – and we are bored, like rich kids in a mansion surrounded by a thousand expensive toys. Medieval people by comparison were like peasants in toyless hovels – and they were fascinated. Occasions for awe and wonder seemed to abound: birth and death and love and light and darkness and wind and sea and fire and sunrise and star and tree and bird and human mind – and God and Heaven. But all these things have not changed, we have. The universe has not become empty and we full; it has remained full and we have become empty, insensitive to its fullness, cold hearted."

View from the Loenen's sun deck: a reminder to wonder.

Does modern science and its technological fruits make the world any less astounding, beyond belief? Does the sheer wonder of existence not unlock an appreciation for God?

G.K Chesterton wrote: ". . . I had always believed that the world involved magic: now I thought that perhaps it involved a magician. . . . this world of ours has some purpose; and if there is a purpose, there is a person. I had always felt life first as a story; and if there is a story there is a story-teller."

I have found Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel very helpful. He writes, for example, "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement . . . get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

Nick Loenen
Richmond, B.C.

The case for dystopian fiction *continued*

Facing fears in the film version of Divergent, *set for release in March 2014.*

their lives. Each story takes a different "What if . . ." question and runs with it.

These books might sound strange – silly, or depressing, or dark. But there's a reason *The Chrysalids* is part of standard high school curriculum at public and Christian schools. Dystopias simultaneously teach and inspire. They teach by vividly illustrating what life would look like without this freedom, or that one. Don't take your life for granted. Protect _____ (clean air/ democratic society/ your own thoughts) from evil. As Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles*, famously said, "I write not to predict the future but to prevent it."

Good dystopian fiction inspires by making the theoretical personal. What if I lived in those conditions? What would I do? Thanks to whistleblowers like Snowden it's not *1984* yet, but other futures are uncomfortably close. Evil is not limited to our imagination. Countries already exist where children are forced to fight each other, which was one aspect of *The Hunger Games* that angered critics. My husband pointed out that on India's coast, old ships are excavated by children exactly as in *Ship Breaker*. Right now my sister is in Haiti, interviewing teenagers who spent their childhoods in domestic slavery. The poverty and oppression experienced by many fictional characters is horrific reality for many around the world in 2013.

Why read about it, then?

Because if the wickedness in these books is real, then so are all the ways to fight it. Again and again, main characters resist the party line – they ask questions, they struggle to understand the big picture. They challenge the status quo and work impossibly hard to overthrow oppressive leaders. They are stubborn, brave, creative and loyal – and rewarded for helping others weaker than themselves.

It's a model for followers of Christ in this world: avoid complacency, ask questions, find out more. "We don't have to accept things the way they are," Monica Sel posted at *Christianity Today's* **her. meneutics** blog – not child labour, not the sex trade. "We can and should fight against injustice in our world."

The odds seem insurmountable, but odds usually are (think fiery furnace) and that doesn't stop any plucky main character worth her salt. If these books illustrate anything, it's that one person's actions can effect enormous change. Don't stand by; step up and take your place on the side of righteousness. Help will come to those who ask for, and fight for, deliverance from evil.

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier. *Her long-time favourite in this genre is* Invitation to the Game *by Canadian Monica Hughes.*

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News

Exodus International to close shop

Announcement garners immediate reaction

Marian Van Til, *with files from EI, BB, NBCNews.com*

IRVINE, California – Exodus International, the 30-year-old Christian "reparative ministry" for homosexuals headquartered in Orlando, Florida, announced last month that it will close up shop.

Exodus's board of directors said it made that decision after "a year of dialogue and prayer about the organization's place in a changing culture." The day before the decision was announced Exodus released a statement apologizing to the "gay community for years of undue judgment by the organization and the Christian Church as a whole."

Exodus president Alan Chambers said, "Exodus is an institution in the conservative Christian world, but we've ceased to be a living, breathing organism. For quite some time we've been imprisoned in a worldview that's neither honouring toward our fellow human beings, nor biblical."

Chambers continued, "From a Judeo-Christian perspective, gay, straight or otherwise, we're all prodigal sons and daughters. Exodus International is the prodigal's older brother, trying to impose its will on God's promises, and make judgments on who's worthy of His Kingdom. God is calling us to be the Father – to welcome everyone, to love unhindered."

Nevertheless, board member Tony Moore insisted, "We're not negating the ways God used Exodus to positively affect thousands of people." However, he asserted, "a new generation of Christians is looking for change – and they want to be heard."

Local ministries that were affiliated with Exodus "have always been autonomous," it was noted, and they will continue – but not under the name or umbrella of Exodus.

Baby out with the bath water?

The announcement drew immediate reaction, positive and negative. Gay groups who previously vilified Exodus for its "reparative" approach celebrated the decision. (Last year California became the first state in the U.S. to ban reparative therapy for teens under 18 years of age. New Jersey's state legislature is weighing similar legislation.)

Chambers (l) apologized for not honouring fellow human beings; Gagnon (r) questions the decision to close Exodus completely.

Rob Gagnon, a board member of Restored Hope Network, a coalition of ministries that aims to help gays and lesbians change, said, "We don't reject reparative therapy out of hand as the Exodus leadership is doing. Neither is it the main platform that we use." Gagnon is also a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminar. He says Restored Hope feels reparative therapy works "for some, but not all."

He explained, "People will even, without therapeutic intervention, go through shifts. For us then to say, 'Well the therapy can't assist that process in any way,' when we know it's going to happen anyway for many people, at least in a limited way, seems to me to be a little bit absurd, unreasonable." He also questioned whether Chambers – who admitted that he had "conveniently omitted my ongoing same-sex attractions" – was acting out of "guilt and shame" for not being transparent about that. "It's out of that guilt and that shame that he's taken a 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' kind of decision," Gagnon said.

Jesus didn't promise 'no temptation'

Russell D. Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, asserted that the folding of Exodus "doesn't mean the folding of an evangelical sexual ethic, though it does mean a move away from a therapeutic model of sexual sanctification." Moore told Baptist Press, "Evangelical Christianity increasingly addresses sexual issues more in line with the older Christian tradition of sin and temptation and triumph than with the language of therapy. We can't have a utopian view of overcoming temptation of any sort." He noted that Jesus never promises freedom from temptation; "but he does promise the Spirit's power to fight temptation, whatever it may be."

Moore continued, "Increasingly churches are addressing persons with same-sex attractions the same way they address everyone else: in terms of the Gospel and a lifelong call to take up one's cross and follow Christ. This means the Christian grappling with same-sex attractions needs to hear that the Gospel addresses him or her, and that this person needs the whole body of Christ, in community, not just an accountability group of those who are defined by the same temptations."

Albert Mohler, a prominent Reformed Baptist and president of Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, told Baptist Press that it became clear last year, when Chambers suggested that persisting in homosexual behaviour has no impact on one's faith or salvation, that he and Exodus International were "rethinking their understanding of a Christian approach to homosexuality." Mohler concluded, "Sadly, it appears that this rethinking has resulted in something like a surrender to the cultural currents of the day."

Christopher Rosik, president of the National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality, a group of therapists who believe sexual orientation can be changed through various approaches including reparative therapy, said he wasn't surprised by the decision. But he doesn't think it will end of the practice, either.

"Reparative therapy . . . does capitalize on certain insights that I think can be applicable for some men, maybe not every man or woman, but are applicable to some," Rosik told NBC News. "And these men and women would attest to that."

He said Exodus' decision wouldn't impact his association's mission to help individuals experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction and behaviour, but he felt it could help make clear the difference between the work being done by religious groups and that by professional therapeutic organizations.

Conversations *continued from page 1*

of our CRC churches said, "Pastoral advice about homosexuality? We don't really need it" (Acts of Synod 1999, p 241). That needs to change. It's time for our church communities to explore these questions at a local level. So I've read the CRC's 1973 and 2002 reports on homosexuality, and brainstormed a few ideas that align with the CRC's biblical and pastoral postures and might help us notice the need for conversation.

Place to belong

First, let's try "becoming more and more comfortable with being uncomfortable" (Acts of Synod 2002, p. 337). Friends of mine have told me that, as they see it, the church is for people who believe the right things and behave the right way, and that makes it a hard place to explore. As Rosaria Butterfield wrote, "the lesbian community as I knew it was accepting and welcoming while the Christian community appeared (and too often is) exclusive, judgmental, scornful and afraid of diversity" (*Secret Thoughts*, p. 5). But it was Jesus himself who shocked people simply by those who felt at home in his company. Can we be a place where people are welcome to explore life with us without any prior commitment to belief or practice?

What if we shaped our church gatherings, ministry, spaces and programs around the question, "How can we create a generous space?" (see Wendy Gritter's work, **btgproject.blogspot.ca**) – until we get comfortable with being uncomfortable? Sermon series, litanies, Sunday school – all focused on "belonging." Perhaps a simple start for $20: a new restroom sign. My transgendered colleagues say they don't know where they belong when they see just "male"and "female." It's hard for me to imagine myself in their shoes, but I've tried when I walked into my church. We have a women's restroom, a men's restroom, and a single-stall "Family" restroom. Could we simply change that last label to say "Individual/Family" (I've also seen "Human" or 'Gender-Neutral"). In that restroom, everyone belongs.

Sharing the load

Second, let's work on "lifting the taboo" and "breaking down the conspiracy of silence" (Acts of Synod 2002, p. 326). Our Christian community has clear and counter-cultural stances on sex. For married heterosexuals, we ask for fidelity. For everyone else: abstinence – whether gay or straight, whether a high schooler or a single parent. How can we support these strong stances amidst so much sexual temptation? Can we break the silence and talk much more about sex? Everyone else is talking about it: the standard North American message seems to be that sex is the epitome of human experience, our ultimate fulfillment. We are told to glory in sex and that sex is glory. Let's challenge that message.

So what about this: Sexual Abstinence Week. Let's invite married couples to abstain from sex too! We are actually told it's good to abstain for the purpose of prayer (1 Cor. 7). Have we done this? Let's have this week shaped by intentional conversations and focused prayer. Highlight the goodness of sex and the challenges of sexual obedience. Talk about pornography, adultery, hookups and our deep desire for connection. Let the whole church be in this together, rooting especially for those who are called to abstinence – keeping the conversation open, intentional and positive. Isn't this part of "bearing one another's burden?" We – all of us – can stop glorifying sex as the ultimate human experience.

Walking with

Finally, let us be "people committed to reflecting God's justice and mercy" (Acts of Synod 2002, p. 337) for the LGBT* community. What about encouraging your whole church community to raise funds and get out for the local AIDS Walk for Life (**aidswalkforlife.ca/findyourwalk**)? Certainly HIV and AIDS affects all people, but gay and bisexual men are more severely affected than any other group according to statistics. Aligning for justice to battle AIDS – it seems so good to me. And what if the Christian community was a significant voice in an anti-bullying campaign (similar to **itgetsbetter.org**)? Can we articulate clearly how we can be biblically for homosexual celibacy and at the same time against bullying of gays and lesbians? I'm sure we think so, but will others see it that way? Wouldn't it be good to learn to navigate that conversation in a public space?

As the CRC talks again about "pastoral advice regarding homosexuality," let's get involved in the messiness of these conversations so that we actually need some fresh advice. Let's be known as a community that welcomes the stranger, supports our sisters and brothers and stands side-by-side for justice with people in the LGBT* community. Then I imagine we'll be hoping for more pastoral advice as we wonder, "How do we understand these things?"

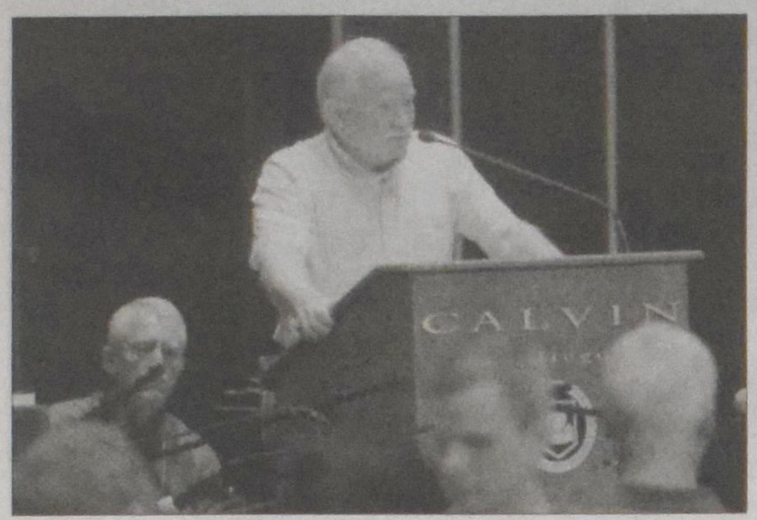
Paul Verhoef works as a Chaplain at the University of Calgary, sent and supported by the Christian Reformed Church.

News

SYNOD2013

CRC Synod 2013 wrap-up

From reports by CRCNA reporters



Ben Vandezande on whether deacons should attend Synod as official delegates.

Larger role for deacons proposed

Delegates proposed changes to the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church that would see deacons join ministers and elders at the annual synod, as well as at classis meetings. To take effect, the proposals require adoption by a subsequent synod.

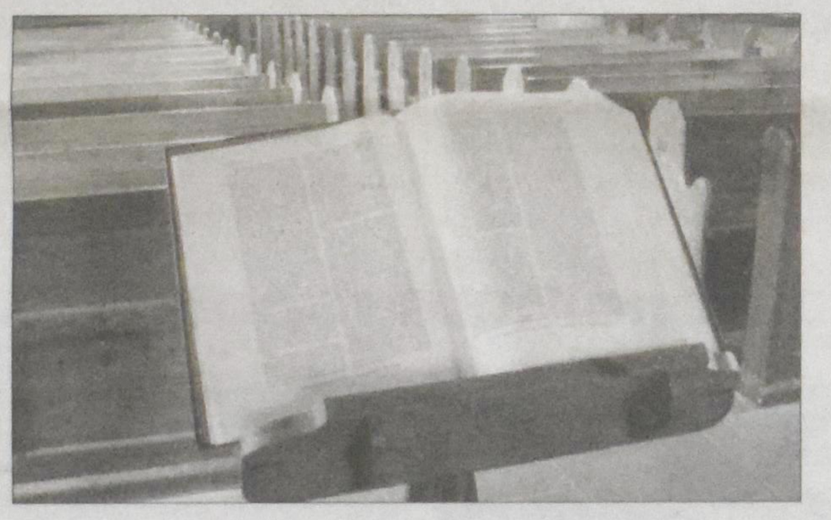
The recommendations came from a report called "Diakonia Remixed," written by the task force that was appointed by Synod 2010 to study the role of deacons in the denominaton.

Many congregations already send deacons to classis meetings, but deacons may not be delegated to synod, which is reserved for elders and ministers. "[Having] deacons at major assemblies is a matter of full representation of the church," said Andrew Ryskamp, director of World Renew-U.S. and an adviser to the task force.

Though considered equal to other officers, too often deacons are seen as "elders in training," task force members said. Most are young, first-time office-holders assigned "simpler tasks of mercy and benevolence," the study said.

– Charles Honey

Shorter entry process for non-CRC pastors rejected



A two-year program for transfers gives better grounding in the CRC.

Synod denied a request for a shorter training process for pastors who have received a theological degree at a school other than Calvin Seminary and served for at least five years in another denomination.

Classis Heartland had asked synod to shorten the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) from two years to one year. The classis said that some of the EPMC program's courses overlap with seminary courses and other skills gained from ministry in local churches.

Synod's reason for denying the change was that "the EPMC program has been carefully prepared over recent years to provide a uniform road of access to ministry in the CRCNA. Its integrity should be protected." Synod noted that the two-year time frame also allows program supervisors to get to know candidates better in order to ground them into the CRC.

– Ryan Struyk

'Join Another Classis If You Must'

Rev. Joe Vanden Akker of Classis Minnkota supports theologically-based classes.

Synod allowed two western Michigan congregations to move to a different classis, provided such a move is agreeable to both the classis and churches involved.

Two Michigan congregations – Trinity in Sparta and 2nd in Kalamazoo – asked to form a new classis, based on their shared conviction that the Bible prevents women from being church office-bearers. Synod said no, stating that such a classis would "create a fixed uniformity that runs contrary to biblical principles and practices of unity."

Instead, the congregations were advised to "seek ways to continue in their current classes" and to seek reconciliation. But if that isn't an option, Trinity and 2nd could join Classis Minnkota – a group of theologically conservative churches in Minnesota and the Dakotas that is willing to accept them. In 2010 synod rejected that option. But this year's synod heard that, in spite of written requests from the two churches, no geographically closer classis had offered to take them in.

"I'm glad there are some churches who want to stay in the CRC in spite of their differences," said elder delegate George Monsma Jr. of Classis Grand Rapids East. "I wish they could agree to stay with other churches that feel differently, but if they can't in good conscience, let's give them another option."

Elder delegate Jacob Ellens from Classis Hamilton said,"I'm struck by the amazing amount of effort these churches went through to do the right thing and remain in the CRC. It's extremely commendable."

Synod agreed to allow two churches to – in the absence of reconciliation with local churches – join a new classis.

Delegates voted 163-12 to allow the two Michigan churches to join a willing classis. "Even though the discussions have been difficult, sometimes painful, there's something that creates peace in that, to have a strong majority in our vote," said Synod 2013 president William Koopmans.

The CRC is organized into 47 classes based on geography (with the exception of Pacific Hanmi, which is based on Korean identity). In an earlier decision, Synod 2013 allowed Urim CRC in Lake Forest, California to move from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

– Roxanne Van Farowe

Canadian woman appointed Calvin Sem prof

"This is an exciting time in the CRC," new prof says.

Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen was given a three-year appointment as associate professor of Old Testament at Calvin Seminary, starting in 2014. She will succeed Carl Bosma in the poistion.

Benckhuysen is an Ontario native. She herself graduated from Calvin Seminary, then went to the University of Toronto for her Ph.D. She is currently teaching at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa). Ordained in the CRC, she was campus minister at the University of Michigan from 1998 to 2001 and also taught at Wycliffe College.

"The CRC is my theological home," Benckhuysen said in her interview with synod. "This is an exciting time in the CRC. To be able to contribute to that in some small way, that's an exciting opportunity to me."

Her approval followed a 45-minute interview and sometimes pointed questioning from delegates, especially regarding her beliefs about the creation story in Genesis and the historicity of Adam. She won praise with honest, candid and sometimes humorous answers. Benckhuysen said Genesis contains "symbolic and literary elements with a historical core," adding, "I think there was a human being who the Bible has named Adam who fell into sin."

Asked what is the central message of Job, she thought for a moment before responding simply, "I am God, and you are not." Delegates applauded.

Benckhuysen also was asked about her views on feminist theology and whether she would have been a Vietnam War protestor in the 1960s. Delegates laughed loudly at her retort: "I'm Canadian."

Benckhuysen told of deepening her faith in high school. She felt called to ministry as an undergraduate and came to seminary with her future husband, Martin, a pastor. They have two daughters.

"I'm passionate about the Scriptures and I'm passionate about [students] learning to dwell in the Scriptures," she told delegates. "I'm also expectant of the Holy Spirit to be present in the classroom when we are studying Scriptures together."

Columns

Cross-examining culture
Julia Stronks

Beyond bystander

Stand against sexual violence

Over the course of the last year several gang rapes have made international news. Much of the focus has been on India where last December 16 several men raped a young woman in New Delhi. She died two weeks later. In March a Swiss tourist was gang-raped in the central Datia district, and in June a 30 year-old American was gang-raped in Manali, India.

We condemn these horrific acts, but sometimes it's easier to look at tragedy far away rather than seeing the sexual violence closer to home. Many of us will experience sexual assault, and it is important to be able to speak about it in order to help stop it.

In April Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17-year-old Nova Scotia girl, attempted suicide and was taken off life support a week later. Her death is attributed to a 2011 gang-rape by boys she knew and the subsequent cyber bullying that followed her accusations. A picture of the assault was posted on the Internet and for the next year boys texted and sent Facebook messages asking to have sex with her. No charges were filed after the initial investigation, and the authorities were unable or unwilling to stop the harassment that occurred afterwards.

This case is tragic and highlights some complicated issues. Crime is decreasing in Canada, but sexual violence remains a significant problem. Over 30 percent of Canadian women report having experienced at least one incident of sexual assault that meets the definition of a crime. Fewer than 10 percent have gone to the police.

It's easy for Christians to assume that problems like this, while sad, do not really impact our community. But I teach a gender course and it has been shocking for me to see that the statistics hold up for the Christian students that I teach. Males and females write about middle school assaults that 10 years later still invade their dreams and shape decisions they make about intimate relationships. Faith communities are not immune; sexual assault impacts women of all races, ages, religions and economic backgrounds. Moreover, we are just beginning to understand how sexual assault impacts males.

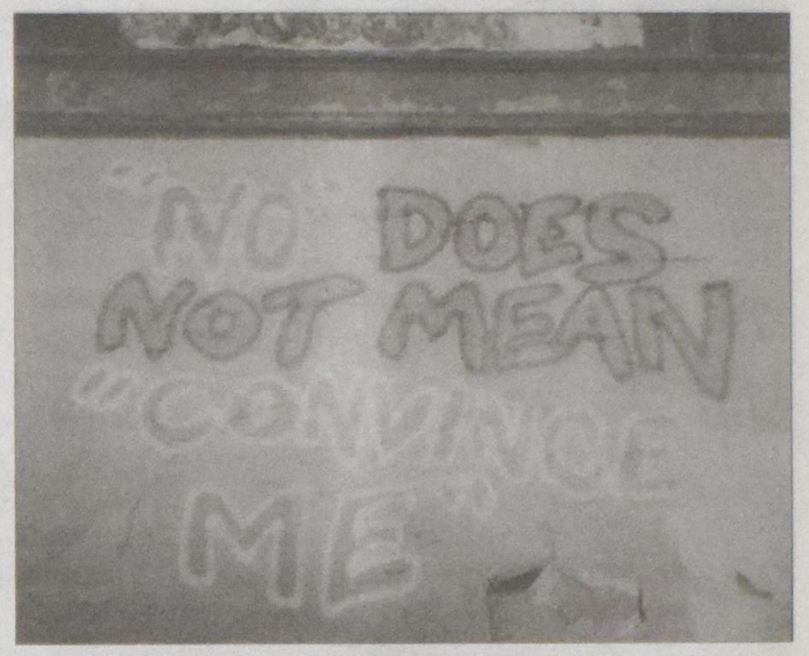
But what can we do?

First, be aware. If we are to protect ourselves and our children we have to know what is going on. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics reports that most sexual assaults happen to people under the age of 24, and half occur either at work or at school. Since only one in 10 assaults are reported to police, nongovernmental organizations have to be part of the solution. Simply asking an employer or school administrator how sexual assault complaints are handled can start a conversation about a safe environment.

Second, do not blame the victim. Most of us are sensitive enough that we do not blame the rape victim for the rape itself, but this issue of blame is much more complicated. Actions that we more easily identify as blameworthy, like promiscuity, drug use and prostitution, are highly correlated with sexual assault in a person's past.

It's also important, though, to talk about safety and alcohol abuse. One of the reasons the legal system has such a hard time prosecuting these cases is that alcohol is often involved. This means that evidence can be compromised. One of the elements of a sexual assault case is the issue of consent. Alcohol use muddies the issue of consent for everyone.

Third, take action. One of my favourite violence prevention organizations is Green Dot at **livethegreendot.com**. Green Dot develops techniques that help organizations teach people to both avoid and prevent violence. Their premise is that everyone is a potential bystander to violence, and we all can work together to create a safe environment. They teach low risk action in high risk situations. For example, if you see someone slip something into a woman's drink at a bar it would be very high risk to confront that person. But it is low risk to knock over the drink accidentally. It is even lower risk to never drink from a glass that you have taken your eyes off for a short while.



Faith communities are not immune to cases of sexual assault.

Sexual assault impacts all of our communities, whether or not we choose to face it. For the sake of those suffering in the aftermath of assault we should all take responsibility by learning how to combat it.

Julia teaches politcal science at Whitworth University (affiliated with the Presbyterian church) in Spokane, Washington.

Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Ethics and lethal autonomous robots

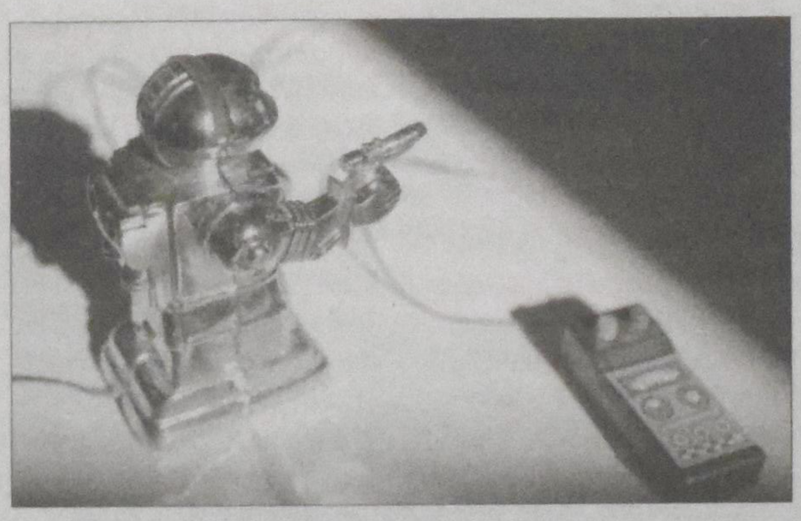
This summer I attended the Association for Christians in the Mathematical Sciences (ACMS) Conference, which was held at Bethel University. One of the keynote speakers was Ron Arkin, a Christian who is a leading researcher in the field of robotics. One of his talks began with a comedic video clip showing a parody of an insurance commercial offering "robot insurance," a product designed to insure against robot attacks. The commercial ends with the sobering line: "for when the metal ones decide to come for you."

Although the notion of a robot attack seems humorous, the fact is that there is active research in the area of lethal autonomous robots. Arkin has already authored a book on the topic entitled *Governing Lethal Behavior in Autonomous Robots*. Although drones and robots are currently used in the military, there is a "human in the loop" who makes the final decision in an attack. In contrast, lethal autonomous robots will be able to operate and kill without human involvement.

The motivation for this research is to provide "force multiplication," to "extend reach" and reduce "friendly casualties." In the U.S. military, there is an ongoing push for more unmanned systems and vehicles. In certain places, such as along demilitarized zones, automatic defense systems are already being explored. Clearly, this research is fraught with numerous ethical issues. Several organizations are calling for a ban or a moratorium on this research, including Human Rights Watch and the UN Human Rights Council.

Robots more 'humane'?

One of the motivations cited for pursuing this research is the atrocities that occur in wartime. Soldiers experience hunger, fear, fatigue and emotions like the desire for revenge that can impact the decisions they make in the battlefield. Robots, it is argued, will be more "humane" since they are not affected by feelings. Furthermore, robots could be equipped with better sensors than a human has to assess the battle situation and detect non-combatants. Robots could be programmed to act conservatively and strictly follow the rules of engagement. Principles of just-war could be hard-coded into robots to minimize suffering, avoid injury to non-combatants and only respond proportionately. Robots could be equipped with an "ethical governor" that ensures the robot acts responsibly. Technology, it is argued, could provide a solution to man's inhumanity to man.



Is it possible to program ethical principles into a robot?

Those who argue against lethal autonomous robots suggest that they will lower the threshold of entry into war as robots provide a "risk-free" form of warfare. Others worry about robots running amok – a scenario that forms the premise of many dystopian sci-fi movies (such as *Terminator* or *Westworld*). Could lethal robots be hacked or infected with a computer virus? Others suggest that the technical challenges to make such robots are far too complex.

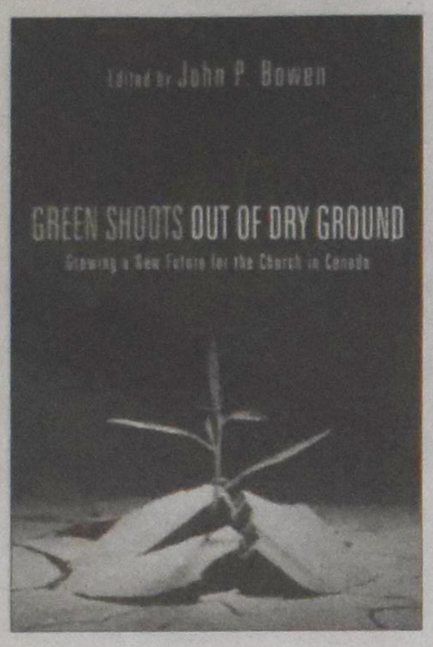
But there is an even more fundamental question: should we hand over ethical decisions to a robot? One of the principles of a just war is that someone should be held justly responsible for the results. Who would be responsible for a casualty caused by a robot soldier? The robot? The programmer? The general who sent out the robot? Can a robot commit a war crime? Responsibility becomes unclear in the case of robot soldiers where there is no direct human control.

Furthermore, is it even possible to program ethical principles into a robot? Can ethics be reduced into a step-by-step computer program? Isaac Asimov explored these ideas in his novels with the notion of the "three laws of robotics." Although these laws were carefully crafted to prevent harm, the novels unpack the problems that can occur when these laws come into conflict.

As technology continues to advance, the possibility of autonomous lethal robots is a real one. The efforts to make robots more ethical are commendable, but this research comes with many questions. Ethics cannot be reduced to rules and flow-charts; it involves understanding context, exercising virtues and discerning norms, sometimes in complex situations. Rather than taking out robot insurance, Christians need to engage in the debate and challenge the notion that we can hand over ethical responsibilities to our machines.

Dr. Derek Schuurman is author of a recent book about faith and computer technology titled Shaping a Digital World.

Reviews



Green Shoots Out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada
John Bowen, editor
Wipf & Stock, 2013.

Exploring the life of a renewed Church

Chris Schoon

Our family lives one street removed from the edge of the city. Within the shadow of suburban sprawl, farmers still work the fields around us. The first corn shoots have just recently begun breaking through the soil. No more than 10-15 centimetres tall, an individual shoot is nothing to look at – it's feeble and rather vulnerable. But when scanning the proverbial 40 acres, I am encouraged by seeing so many little shoots covering the landscape together. I see the life that is coming, and then I realize that life is already here.

It's this type of hopeful, promising scene that John Bowen depicts by gathering the tangible stories and theological reflections of church planters and missional church practitioners from across Canada. While reminding us that "every church was once upon a time a church plant – a baby church," Bowen successfully shifts the reader's attention from the all-too-familiar despair over the seemingly inevitable decline of the Church to a question of "What varieties of the kingdom will grow in this new soil and climate?". Interspersed with 10 vignettes of particular and often unrefined expressions of church, *Green Shoots* unfolds as an invitation to see how the Spirit is already growing the church. As if facilitating a backyard conversation among friends, Bowen draws out a wide variety of stories about where and how the authors have glimpsed the kingdom of God coming in the Canadian context.

Green Shoots is full of engaging, encouraging, and thought provoking insights. John Stackhouse's grandfatherly musings on church planting in the 1950s serve as experienced wisdom calling for creativity in engaging today's landscape. Cam Roxburgh humbly invites readers to recover the practice of hospitality as a way of aligning ourselves with God's heart "for those who do not know the Gospel," and as an invitation "to become missionaries in the places where God has put us." Four chapters focus on the diversity of the Canadian context, pointing out along the way that many new immigrants are Christians who are eager to plant churches. These chapters reveal how a new story about mission and church planting, one not centrally marked by the remnants of colonialism, is emerging even as established churches appear to be in decline. Also expanding the vision for missional engagement, the Kostamos' chapter on "Creation Care as Christian Mission" challenges assumptions about the expansiveness of God's reconciliation and our participation in it, contending that "as a missional way of life [creation care] is everyone's calling."

Another chapter that challenges and reframes is worth noting here. In praising the resilience and communal strength of "town and country" churches, Cam Harder reframes the primary resources in a church around the gathered and scattered people, rather than the clergy. Suggesting "We can also ask, 'What gifts do we have besides money, clergy and buildings out of which to create ministry?' Too often we judge a church's viability according to its accumulation of those three resources," Harder urges congregations to recognize the latent resources already present in the church as a whole.

So how do we equip, encourage and send the next generation of leaders and congregations for this kind of missional engagement? Alan Roxburgh's chapter describes the kind of leader needed, Jane Alexander tells about an Anglican diocese's deliberate shift toward missional engagement, and Jenny Addison provides an overview of available missional church resources. Yet, for the "green shoots" of this book to thrive and multiply throughout Canada, a new approach to training and mentoring new leaders is needed. A chapter on the in-ministry track at Tyndale Seminary, the pioneer ministry track at Wycliffe College, or on the mentoring processes that missional communities are using to raise new leaders from within would have rounded out the book quite well.

In the end, Bowen's work offers a hopeful and encouraging invitation to participate in God's ongoing renewal of the church across Canada. The combination of cultural and theological analysis, story-telling and practical wisdom makes Green Shoots an accessible and beneficial resource for any Christian interested in the future of the church in Canada.

Chris Schoon, Senior Pastor at First Hamilton CRC, is a Th.D. candidate at Wycliffe College (Toronto) with a focus on missional theology. He blogs at ***muddiedprayers.com*** *and can be followed on Twitter @muddiedprayers.*

A compelling consideration of a complex story

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Cine Mosaic and Mirabai Films
directed by Mira Nair.

Bruce Soderholm

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Mira Nair's most recent directorial offering, was released in theatres on the heels of the recent Boston Marathon bombing. The coincidence is interesting given that the novel on which the film is based was released in the aftermath of 9/11. Appreciating the dynamics of this film is impossible apart from understanding the context of a post-9/11 America.

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* falls within the genre of political thriller, as it explores espionage and intrigue on a truly international stage. The story opens in current day Lahore, Pakistan. An American university professor is brazenly kidnapped one evening. Amid the machinations of CIA analysts trying to determine his whereabouts, a young and outspoken professor from the same university, Changez (Riz Ahmed), is viewed as a potential source of information. A muslim Pakistani nationalist who is articulate with respect to Western ideology, Changez is suspected of having ties to an organization that is the equivalent of Al Qaeda. He agrees to be interviewed by American news correspondent, Bobby Lincoln (Liev Schreiber). As their conversation proceeds, Changez's story unfolds in episodic flashbacks.

Lincoln (Liev Scrieber) tracks Changez's (Riz Ahmed) alienation from the American Dream.

We quickly see that Changez is extremely bright – bright enough to earn a scholarship to Princeton – and that his pursuit of an Ivy League education puts him at odds with his family's humble economic status. His father, a respected Pakistani poet, challenges Changez not to let his business education alienate him from his family's value system.

From the outset, it's clear that Changez will have to work hard for every advantage he wants to gain. His extreme work ethic and tenacity land him a position with Underwood Samson, a Wall Street corporate evaluation firm where his boss, Jim Cross (Kiefer Sutherland), is pleased to groom him for a possible future partnership. From a capitalist's standpoint, this is the American Dream. His life is enhanced by a romantic relationship with Erica (Kate Hudson) – an elite Manhattan artist and photographer.

Life couldn't be better – or so it seems. Then comes 9/11. Returning to New York from a Phillipines business trip, Changez discovers how drastically the socio-political landscape has changed. Being strip-searched by Airport security, without any reasonable rationale, is the first of several incidents that brings his adopted Western lifestyle into question. Changez's confession to Erica that he's not entirely repelled by any David capable of humbling an American Goliath informs the audience that his alienation from the American Dream has begun.

An obviously torn Changez has a subsequent encounter with a Turkish book publisher which precipitates a crisis of choice. Changez is told, "When you determine where you stand, colour will return to your world." It's not a coincidence that the corporate world is draped in the drab blues and greys of glass and steel, while the world that's revealed in visits to Changez's native Pakistan, is festooned with bright reds among other vivid colours.

Riz Ahmed's performance anchors the film. He looks ambitious at every turn, but as his character evolves, the strength of his ideals are also reflected in his taciturn facial expressions. Kiefer Sutherland's performance is capable, though he's sometimes only a few turns away from his latent Jack Bauer persona from the television series "24." A dark-haired Kate Hudson is less than convincing in her appearance as Changez's love interest. The on-screen chemistry needed for their cross-cultural romance to be credible simply isn't there. Liev Schreiber is much more believable in his role as his character wrestles with contrary allegiances to truth-telling and patriotism.

In the final act of the film, all the political and espionage elements coalesce. The audience is kept guessing as to what the role of Bobby is in the kidnapping crisis. More to the point, we are left to wonder where Changez's loyalties truly lie. He is strongly nationalistic, but does that make him a terrorist? Suspense legitimately builds to a violent climax as forces clash and everyone's motives are finally laid bare.

A well-crafted film allows its audience to see a familiar situation through a different lens. The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* achieves this. The narrative surrounding 9/11 that is rehearsed on cable news networks on both ends of the political spectrum is remarkably similar. What Nair's film fights against is the impulse to reduce complex conflicts to binary equations. That metaphor works in the context of any temptation to place belief, whether it be political or religious, beyond the scope of honest dialogue and nuanced consideration. In a world polarized by competing belief systems, this is a message that's well worth emphasizing.

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is rated 14A in Ontario for language, some violence and brief sexuality.

Bruce Soderholm is a freelance writer and educator who has been writing on the arts and entertainment beat for the last decade. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont.

Features

Living in relationship with everything

Nick Schuurman

"I am attached to a piece of geography."

So opens author John Terpstra's *Falling into Place*. It is, he writes, "what happens when one person becomes completely enamoured of the landscape, and a particular feature of the landscape, in the city where he lives." I was struck, when I sat down with the Hamilton poet in October, by how true that statement remains. What follows is the remainder of our conversation regarding his recently re-released collection of poems, *Naked Trees*, the first part of which was featured in the May 27th issue of *Christian Courier*.

PAUL O'HARA

Poet John Terpstra. Terpstra with friends Bob Henderson and Daniel Coleman, Nov. 6, 2012.

Why trees?

'Cause I can't do people.

Why I have an interest in trees is just native to me for some reason. I think it's having a living being that just fundamentally stays in one place and grows. There was an old evangelical campaign, you know, something about "grow where you're planted." And it just gets bigger, and maybe part of that had to do with being of an immigrant background, and moving, and maybe it had to do with watching the tree that was in the front yard of our housing development suffer because of the disturbance to its roots, and then after a few years, and some heavy-duty pruning by my dad, come right back to life. That coming back from, if not near death, then a pretty thin form of life.

People talk about metaphor and people talk about reality. There is a metaphor there, but the metaphor is so close to the bone that it is almost inexpressible except in its own terms. So when I talk about trees I guess I am talking about everything. And they're right there in front of you. You can just sit back and look at them. And I do, because I am a fundamentally lazy person. And so you can sit in a chair and observe a tree indefinitely and it won't stop rewarding you for that. You just have to go at a much slower pace. Which is another thing, that much slower pace. It is nice to have something that refuses to go any faster than it does.

When I started writing these things, it was in combination with making furniture in a furniture shop, where we threw away a lot of wood. Because we went to piecework, it meant that we got paid for the amount of furniture that we made. And so it no longer was profitable or made any sense to linger over the lumber pile, picking out the best pieces of wood. The amount of lumber that we threw away – perfectly good wood that had been a tree and gone through that whole process of cutting and drying and delivery – that was just thrown into a big bin and then someone came around every week, hauled it away and used it for firewood. It was a bit of a short circuit in the circle of life that seemed wrong on some level, and so I wanted to atone for it.

And also trees were providing me with my livelihood and so I owed them for that kind of a debt. This is what human beings do, we take from the earth, we take trees and we take animals and we use them for our own needs and desires and don't always give back and often maltreat. And so this is my way of giving back.

Much of the book is written with a sense of loss for what has been lost, or is at risk of being lost. Where is the hope of this book, and beyond that, your hope for this place?

The trees themselves give me hope.

I mean that walnut tree coming back from a near-death experience was on some fundamental level pretty impressive to me. And that's what they do. It's like what my wife says about dogs: "ever hopeful." And trees are ever hopeful, they come back, and not only that, they come back before winter. They've already got buds before next spring, in the fall (which was a real revelation to me, I never knew they do that). They have the hope implanted in them before the onslaught, before the depths of darkness descend. There's a fundamental belief there that I would like to think comes out of creation itself.

As far as this city goes, it's pretty darn interesting. I've had people who have moved to the city and were surprised and said, "It's a city of trees." I think it's not the only city where people are surprised that there are a lot of trees. That said, when we look from the top of the escarpment, we see a lot of trees. It is all green – except this time of the year.

But by the same token, there's not a lot of old trees. I was in Toronto the other day, by the beaches, and saw these big old trees there. Or go to Grand Rapids, Mich. and there are these huge trees that are incredibly old. We don't have them here. And I wonder why that is. There are trees that are 150 years old, 200 years old. There is a botanist who lives down the street and he took me on a tour and he showed me oak trees that are 150 years and 200 years old. But they are the last of that vintage hanging around and they won't last forever.

We're living in relationship with everything, including the trees. I happen to have a particular interest in geography and in people living within their geography and in the trees – in people's houses and stuff like that. I get hope when I actually see people develop a relationship with those elements. It doesn't take a lot to spark hope. Living in Hamilton, you've had to get used to living on air, and not even the greatest quality air, for a long time. There are signs of hope in people moving into the city and with the relationship that people have with this landscape, and that includes the trees.

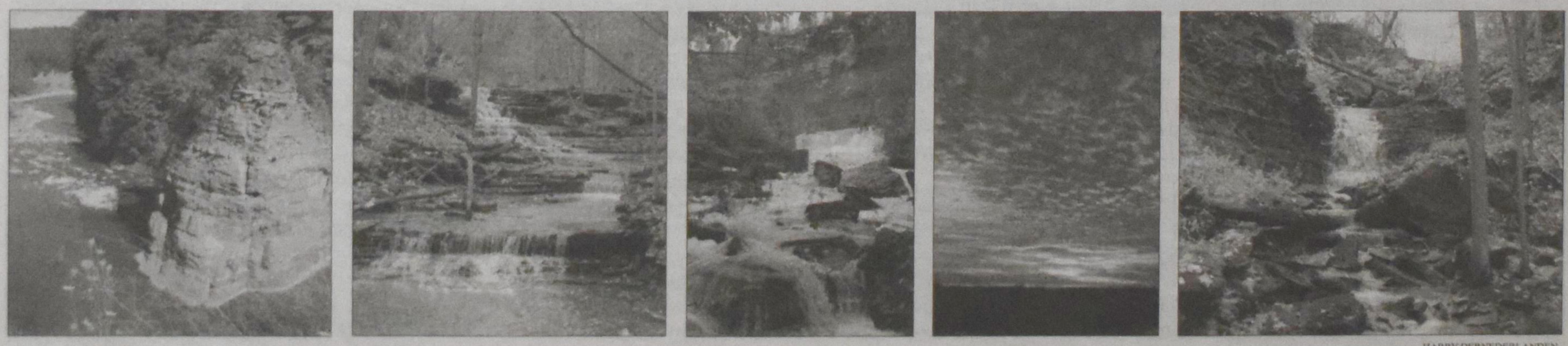
The trees are a kind of rootedness that is second only to our buildings. Except they seem to come and go with a greater frequency. They seem to last forever, but they don't. There's a line in the book that says, "no tree is replaceable." That's true, but there are other trees that follow. It's going to be a long time before they are bigger, but there is a certain belief in the continuity of things that is implied in planting trees.

Given the focus of so much of your writing, and your affection for it, one might have assumed you would have fled the city and set up a cabin in the woods somewhere. What's kept you here?

We just did this little Thanksgiving game, where we asked, "If you were in a time machine, where would you want to go back to?" My answer, which is in my book *Falling into Place* as well, I think, was that I would like to go back to 1798. Right here. I want to see how people (admittedly I am talking about white, American and Scottish people who came to settle in this area, with all due respect to the original inhabitants) gradually settled in the area. I am fascinated by the gradual population, how the human beings that first came here interrelated with their landscape, and with this geography, because it means something to me. Where, and in proximity to what do you place yourself? What do you do when you've placed yourself there? Water, other people, rock, the escarpment, and trails – this geography has kind of a lot to offer that way. And its history has a lot to offer too. And so yes, I am interested in nature, but not exclusive of its relationship to human beings. I am not a big wilderness guy.

Also, I've stayed partly because I feel on some level that it is important for me to be close to the mess that we've made of things. There is no other way to look at the shoreline of the bay and what's happened there and to not realize that it is a mess. That is putting it mildly, making it sound like that's what you do to your bedroom, but it is more profound than that. And so part of me thinks that it would not be right for me personally to remove myself from it, at least not yet, until I've dealt with it.

Nick Schuurman (schuurman.nick@gmail.com) lives in Cambridge, Ontario, and studies at McMaster Divinity College.



HARRY DERNEDERLANDEN

Features

Creative fire in worship and the church

Rodney Hugen

We serve a God who creates from nothing and we marvel as we look around the world at the awe-inspiring offerings of the One who made all that we see. In every area of life he delights all of our senses with his wonderful creativity. As people made in his image, he also imparts to us the ability to create using what he has given us. Nowhere should that creative fire be more visible than in our churches and especially in our worship as we return to him what he has given us.

One of the core values of the church I serve, the Village in Tucson, Ariz. is creativity. It was one of our founding principles and we celebrate it in as many ways as we can dream up. We take pleasure in composing songs, painting pictures, cooking delicious food, finding new ways to express the ancient faith, writing our own children's materials and Bible studies and decorating the space we have been given. We urge members and friends to explore their talents and abilities and see what they might bring to God in gratitude for what they have been given.

Encouragement is a huge key to unlocking creativity. When we first began our ministry, it was hard to find musicians willing to serve the church, so we offered to buy instruments and pay for lessons and in so doing assembled several guitarists, keyboardists, drummers and vocalists willing to offer their skills. We ask a good deal of them. We urge them to write their own music and lyrics using Scripture, creeds, confessions and other sources of inspiration. We also use hymns and songs that are in the public domain. We make arrangements with other similar-minded churches to share songs as well. We now have numerous musicians and singers and a wonderful repertoire of songs dearly loved by our people.

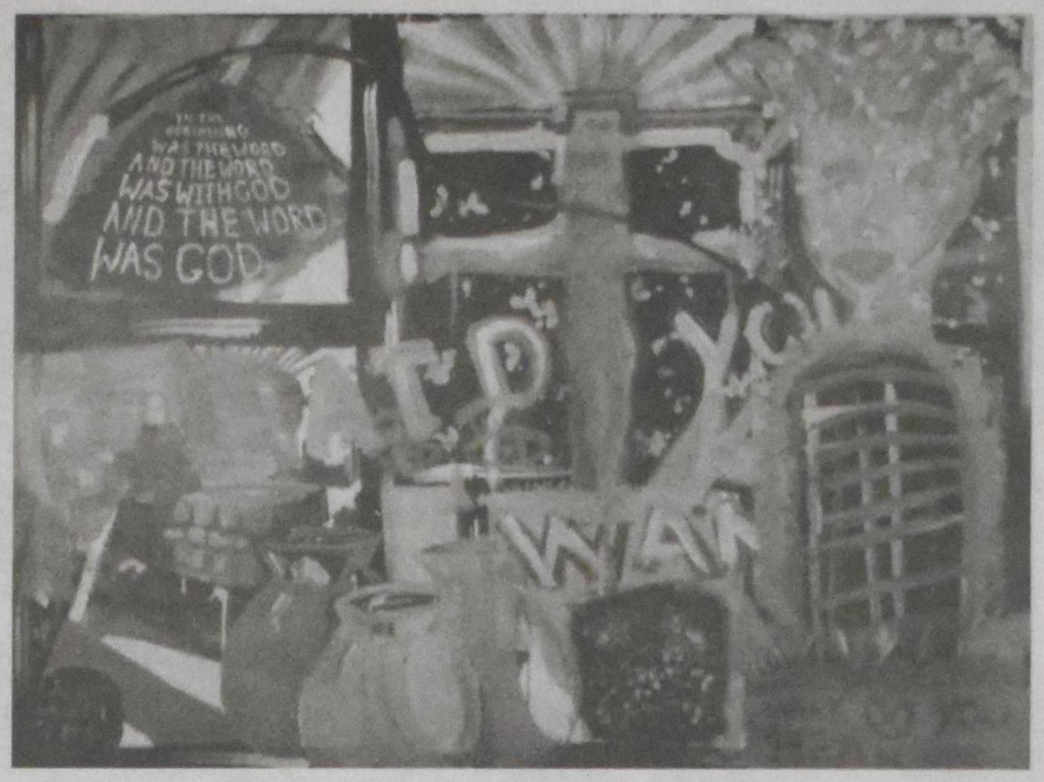
Covenanting to be together.

Each year we have a Belonging Service where we recognize our membership and find unique ways to express that we are part of each other. We had people bring a bit of paper that contains something significant to them – a poem, a drawing, a picture – and created a giant découpage. We purchased puzzle pieces that members took home and decorated and then were assembled as part of a beautiful mosaic. Recognizing that we are broken people, we once asked folks to bring a bit of broken glass from home and assembled the jagged pieces into a beautiful piece of art that continues to grace our church walls. These artistic endeavors serve as a constant reminder that we have covenanted to be together.

We have had art shows, concerts and other events that we invite the community to come and enjoy. One such event was the Black and White Show where people brought black and white photography, paintings and drawings to beautify our space. All the art that hangs on the walls of the building we have been given is art created by people in our community. During worship times we invite people to reflect on it, savour it and let it point them to God.

Beauty from ashes

There is a legend that during the time of Martin Luther, homes sometimes had a Sinner's Chair where those who were burdened by sin – either their own sin, the sin of others against them or sin in the world – would go and sit and the family would gather around them, singing and praying over them, lifting them to God. We created just such a chair for the Village. Our Sinner's Chair is coated in black with the names of the seven deadly sins painted onto its slats and people often go and sit there when they are burdened and crushed by sin. Elders and leaders gather around them and lift their concerns to God. The chair is well worn, having been broken and rebuilt numerous times. It's a singular piece of furniture and even its blemishes add a rich beauty to our worship space.



The Sinner's Chair at the Village in Tucson, Ariz (left). Creativity is a core value at the Village.

Each week we serve a meal to the congregation which allows those who love to cook and bake an opportunity to offer their talents to God. It takes exceptional creativity to feed many people on a very small budget and it is a sensory delight to walk into a church emanating the pleasing smells of roasting food. We designed our kitchen along with indoor and outdoor dining areas to make cooking, serving and eating food together an enjoyable communal experience. There is no better way to create space for good conversation with guests than to do so around food.

There are so many opportunities to express creativity. Website design, landscaping, furniture arrangement, making signs, party planning and a multitude of other tasks are all realms where people can express creativity and bring joy to others. It is good to assume that all of us have a creative spark and that our creativity can be used by God to further his kingdom. It is wonderful to watch those who doubt they have anything to offer walk into the pleasure of presenting their talents, gifts, and abilities to God and to each other.

Creating a safe place for creativity

There are certainly things that push against our expressions of creativity in worship and the church. One is the fear of judgment, rooted in our demands for excellence. It is hard and hurtful to cook for a hundred people only to hear all that is wrong with the meal you just worked for hours to prepare. Creative efforts require that we expend time and energy to accomplish them. Paintings don't just appear on walls, but demand that a painter acquire canvas, paints, brushes, technique and inspiration before she or he even begins to apply paint to the canvas. Artistic endeavours are almost never accomplished in a few moments and it is important to allow space to fail.

We designed a unique worship initiative to foster an environment where creativity would be received gratefully. We wrote particular artistic efforts (such as baking a cake, writing a song, using calligraphy, painting a watercolor, completing a sculpture, or creating a poem) on small cards that we then sealed in envelopes. The envelopes were distributed randomly to the congregation with the request that within the next month they attempt whatever endeavour was contained in the envelope. They were not to trade their task for some other, but were invited to take the risk to try their hand at the creative activity they were given. We made sure to furnish supplies such as paints, canvas, rhyming dictionaries, baking and cooking utensils and anything else that might be needed. We also listed the names of folks in the community who had experience in various creative fields. We then held an art show where the offerings were exhibited, shared or consumed by the whole congregation. We encouraged people not to make judgments since we knew that for most individuals it would likely be the very first attempt in an unfamiliar genre of art. Instead we chose simply to celebrate the attempt. What a delightful time we experienced as we enjoyed such variety of expression and got a glimpse of God's gracious gifts to his people.

Another impediment to expressions of creativity in worship and the church is pride. There are those who wish to draw attention to themselves rather than offer glory to God. It is sometimes difficult for us to fully grasp the words of I Corinth. 4:7: "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" It can be easy to think that our artistic abilities are ours because of some personal attribute, instead of a simple pouring out of God's gifts on us.

At the Village our musicians and vocalists position themselves off to the side and behind the congregation so as to discourage the performance mentality that can so easily consume us. We find this allows musicians to concentrate on offering the music to God and allows the congregants to focus on the beauty of the music and the words they are singing.

Today our church experiences a wonderful diversity of creative artistry that serves to point us to and reminds us of God's love and grace showered on us. On a continuing basis we get to experience the joy of giving back to him the creative gifts he has given to us.

Rod Hugen is a pastor at the Village in Tucson and a church planter working for Classis Arizona (CRC).

Billy and Ted

Frank DeVries

The intensity of a squabble between an environmentalist and a pipeline proponent cannot hold a candle to the heat generated in an argument dealing with the gay scene. The topic of homosexuality continues to draw out resentful, sometimes shocking outbursts of anger, dividing people in ways few other controversies can. Let me illustrate.

The October 2012 issue of *The Banner*, the denominational magazine of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, featured an article by retired CRC pastor Rev. Harry Kuperus, titled "Arm in Arm." It referenced another CRC pastor's wife who, with her family, had immigrated to Canada, where she tirelessly worked for gender equality in the CRC – one of the Kuperus children was a lesbian. The pastor recalled a time when his wife and daughter went for a walk. About to overtake another couple, the girl mentioned that these two once made rude remarks about her homosexuality. Hearing this, the mother demonstratively and defiantly put her arm through that of her daughter as they passed. Rev. Kuperus concluded the article by saying that, "the image . . . inspires me to believe that my church someday [will] have the courage to fully affirm all her children."

Reaction to the article, however, included this comment: "I presume the people who want to affirm the practising homosexuals would also have no problem with those who actively commit adultery, view pornography, and use the services of prostitutes?"

Created this way or born this way?

Billy

Billy was a slight, 3-year-old pupil in my wife's Christian preschool class; his two older siblings attended another private school. My wife's classroom was organized into play areas. One corner of the room had trucks, garages and building toys; another had clothes for dress-up games, while still others featured trinkets, dolls and even a pretend cooking area complete with pots and pans. The children could play together in whatever area of the room they chose.

Billy would nearly always gravitate to the dress-up area or play with ribbons. This was never a problem, until one day his father, a medical doctor, told my wife to make sure Billy played with "boy" toys and not "girl" toys. This directive was difficult to enforce not only because school policy allowed the children to play where they wanted, but also because Billy just did not like to play with cars, trucks or Lego blocks – the perceived boy toys.

Billy's mom, also a medical doctor, once mentioned to my wife that her husband was extremely concerned about the boy's "sissy" behaviour. At Christmas time he had purchased a fire truck with all possible bells and whistles, but Billy had burst out in tears because he had wanted a Barbie doll. That incident may well have underlain a subsequent talk he had with my wife when he told her his son was "a rotter."

Ted

In the Christian elementary school where I taught, it was policy that as long as one of two parents was a practising Christian, as confirmed by a church pastor, a child could be enrolled. As principal I was satisfied the single mother I interviewed met that requirement, and I duly registered her child Ted as a student in the 6th grade for the next school year.

On the first day of school, a small mob of students crowded into the classroom to pick what they thought was the best place to sit. They all knew each other from the previous grade, and were surprised when a new student daintily traipsed in and sat down in the last remaining seat. The way he moved immediately caused snickers and raised eyebrows: "What have we got here?" When the kids returned to class after recess, talking loudly, laughing and pushing each other, I was delighted to see Ted smack in the midst of it all. Clearly the kids had looked beyond their first impressions and accepted him for who he was.

Throughout the year Ted showed himself an outstanding student. Acquiring better than average grades he could memorize and recite large portions of scripture without evident effort and declaim better than I had ever heard done before by a 12-year-old. On Fridays, the last period was usually left for a play. Without fail Ted would volunteer to take the female role, dress up like one and happily apply makeup and whatever else necessary to complete his transformation as a girl. Quite comfortable with his new-found image, he would go home on the bus without removing his makeup or changing back into his boy clothes.

Support

Fast forward five years. Billy is 8, and attends 2nd grade at a Christian elementary school. His parents had wanted Billy to go to the same private school his two older brothers attended, but that didn't happen. It was that school's policy to observe new applicants prior to admission, and having noticed Billy's dainty and genteel mannerisms they decided not to accept him. Angry about this refusal, the parents removed Billy's two brothers from the school, and enrolled them in the same school Billy attended.

Ted is 17, a student in the 11th grade of a public secondary school. A good student, he excels in languages, drama and art, and likes to bury himself in books. Handsome, with olive skin, beautiful eyes and a thick crop of brown curls, he is not hard to look at. One year ago Ted came out as a gay man. He still lives at home with Sandra, his mom, and Mark, his step dad. Although well aware of his gender orientation, his parents are determined to support him in whatever way they can, for they love their child. This decision has had unexpected repercussions: several of their friends don't seem to come by as often as they used to. Some have insisted that with proper treatment Ted could be changed back into a "normal" boy again. Ted's parents reject this kind of thinking as patent nonsense.

Mark and Sandra run a small Christian bookstore in the local strip mall, and get along well with one of their best customers, Casey van Alten, a pastor at the local Community church. The previous week they had gotten together with him and his wife, and had discussed the homosexuality issue. They do not always agree with each other. Pastor Casey maintains that homosexuality is a sin, and quoted a number of passages from the Bible to support his belief.

"*Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. . . . Men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversions*" (Rom. 1:26-27).

"*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God*" (I Cor. 6:9-10).

"*We also know that [the] law is made not for good men but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me*" (I Tim. 1:9-11).

But at the end of their discussion Mark had asked Casey, "How can homosexuality possibly be a sin? Is it not the way God had made Ted? Listen to Psalm 139: '*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*'"

From Billy's and Ted's behaviour, it is clear that signs of same-gender attraction can be already be present at young age, and that these are entirely innocent and natural. At a later date, however, such effeminacy is seen quite differently. As teenagers, such boys begin to realize who and what they are and may come out as gay persons. Boys like Billy and Ted may suddenly begin to experience rejection by former friends, sometimes even by their family and church members. Gradually they become social outcasts. What at first was seen as different or quaint is now sinful. What happened? What has changed? Billy and Fred have not changed – it is the perception of their friends, family members and church that has changed. Now it is demanded of them they deny their natural inclinations and remain celibate in the same way priests in the Roman Catholic Church must deny *their* natural inclinations. But, and this is their cry, "We cannot help what we are!" They are right, for science has shown that it is epigenetic changes in their genes that cause them to be what they are.

Losses

The denunciation of homosexuality continues to cause much pain. In 2012, Jamie Hubley, 15-year-old gay son of Ottawa Counselor Allan Hubley committed suicide.

*See **Billy and Ted**, p. 19*

Columns

Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke

Time out

Stephanie generously spent her thirty-second birthday with Jack and me, picking rocks off of the cornfields for hours on end, in the heat and dust of early spring.

A week or so prior, I had asked her what she might like for her birthday. To my surprise and delight, she requested a mother/daughter retreat. (I doubt she had stone picking in mind.) We had gone away together once a couple of years ago and enjoyed it so much that we promised to do it annually. But our good intentions yielded to overly full calendars. We finally penciled in time together at the end of May.

The weeks before were typically busy with spring tasks. As our retreat weekend approached, I vowed to handle the work as best I could but not let it get in the way of precious time with my daughter. Nevertheless, I felt guilty pulling away on Friday afternoon leaving Jack behind with a rented lawn roller and hours of work still ahead of him.

But the sunshine and blue skies soon distracted me from unfinished chores. We drove through magnificent rolling countryside to the lovely town of Goderich, nestled on the shores of Lake Huron. We checked into a quaint hotel, enjoyed a leisurely supper and spent time chatting and laughing until midnight. Saturday morning we woke to a sparkling day. After a relaxing breakfast we took to the hiking trail above the north harbour, including the old railway bridge visible from Highway 21.

I felt like a kid again. Instead of the usual Saturday morning housework, I was busy with the hard work of goofing off. And I loved it. We drove down to the south harbour and meandered along the boardwalk by the beach. Then we wandered in and out of the small shops downtown. We had a late lunch in a local restaurant and then headed off to the featured event – a trail ride at a horse ranch outside of the hamlet of Londesboro.

'Not long enough'

We pulled in twenty minutes early. The owners of the ranch, Hugo and his wife Fridi, sat on the front porch, apparently awaiting our arrival. I guess I had expected them to be scurrying about, doing what ranchers do. But Hugo relaxed in the shade, looking like a dignified cowboy, wearing a leather vest and black stetson. Fridi basked in the sunshine, the sleeves of her tee shirt rolled up, her smiling face peering out from beneath a Dutch *petje*.

Two chubby terriers, almost identical to each other greeted us at the car and escorted us to the front porch.

Hugo informed us that one more woman would be joining our ride, but she wouldn't be there for at least another 45 minutes. "Are you in a hurry?" he asked.

"No," I said. And as I said it, I realized that for the first time in several weeks, I really wasn't in a hurry at all.

Stephanie and I walked around the farm yard. Nothing was trimmed or cultivated. But it was naturally beautiful. We rounded the corner behind a small barn and beheld a field full of horses, all sizes, shapes and colours. Fridi told us there were 29 animals in all, each one named and loved.

Hugo approached with a bucket of oats and spread a line of feed on the ground. The horses sauntered up and we realized the gates between us and them were unlatched.

"Normally we let them wander around the yard," said Hugo. "I never cut the grass. They take care of it for me."

Looking around I could see he was telling the truth.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Not long enough," he said with a smile. "We came here in 2002. And I've loved every minute of it."

Finally our riding partner arrived. I mounted a gigantic horse named Bob. He stood calmly as I hoisted myself with great effort onto his back. Stephanie climbed onto a chestnut gelding named Claybert. We rode through the woods and fields, listening to tall tales of Hugo's adventures on the farm and his laid back philosophy of life.

An hour and a half later, with sore bottoms and happy faces, we dismounted and headed for home.

I drove up our laneway and admired the manicured lawns and freshly mulched flowerbeds. Everything looked lush and well tended, as it should this time of year. But I thought back to the rustic beauty of the horse ranch and realized things don't have to be perfect to be gorgeous.

God didn't intend us to work 24/7. We need rest and relaxation as much as the stimulation and satisfaction of hard work. Time out once in awhile can give me renewed strength for the work I need to do. So this summer I'll try to work a little harder at goofing off and doing it well.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ont.

If you're too busy to horse around once in awhile, you're just too busy.

Artful Eye

HARRY DERNEDERLANDEN

We are your troubadours

You, O Lord, are a loving, merciful God;
even your judgments drip with mercy
like sunlight from the leaves
of oaks, maples and willows in Short Hills.

You, O Lord, are a Lord of the living
and you are our source of life,
even beyond the grave. All living
things move, leap, roar and sing in praise
of you from the cicadas high in the trees
to the cows and bulls lowing in the pasture.

The waterfalls and cataracts splashing down
the escarpment burst with sparks of light
and give liquid voice to the life that surges
even through rock and water and sunlight.

But more delightful to you, O Lord,
are the praises of your people as they
open their throats and hearts to you
to praise you and give you thanks
for we are your troubadours, your chorus.
We have been given life and breath and voice
to make the earth and sky vibrate and echo
with the words and melodies you've given us.

Time surges, breaks, circles like a river,
like Niagara's booming splurge
carrying us it seems wildly and forever.
We plan, we dream, we love and labour.
Then even the strongest hands begin to quiver
and lose their grip on worldly things.

Harry DerNederlanden

Harry DerNederlanden, now deceased, was a longtime editor of Christian Courier. *This poem is printed with permission.*

Columns

Borderless

Brent van Staalduinen

The decadence of need

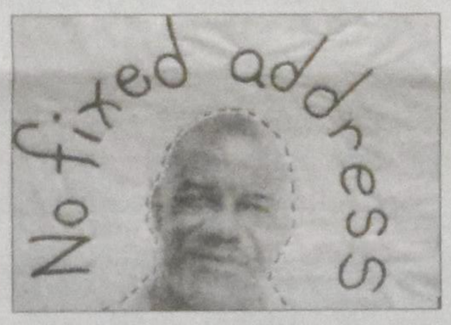
You decide to take in Hamilton's Art Crawl this time around. Gorgeous summer weather brings crowds to James Street North for an evening of galleries and food, music and song, artisans and the conveniently artistic. It's loud, boisterous. The crowds. The vendors and performers who paid for the permits and choicest locations. The others, too, the ones who were assigned street corners by entirely different means. Something for everyone.

You feel the brush of something on your arm. A long-haired guy clad in surplus green has gotten up from the stoop and is thrusting his drawings at you. *Two bucks for art*, he says. You smile and keep moving, not sure how to respond. His friends chime in and reach out, canvases and papers and art boards fluttering towards you like strange, leafy offerings. *Two bucks to support a great cause!* he yells at your back. You want to ask what cause that is.

Then you feel guilty, and don't quite know why.

Outdated

You think the term "homeless" might be outdated, but can't think of a politically correct substitute. Displaced. Without means. Destitute. A colleague with better connections to those in need insists on "street-involved" because he refuses to use the others. There's more choice than most people realize, he says. He would know – his son is out there somewhere.



Are you aware of the many ways to savour a hardened heart?

Service isn't just a word to you, Christian. You were raised to serve the poor in Christ's name, the hungry, the destitute, but you more often think about globe-bellied African babies than the guy in saggy pants and chains on the corner of Barton and James. You feel a lot of things when you walk around your city or town and encounter need – pity and guilt in equal measure, maybe.

There's never a straight answer, an uncomfortable reality, as many strands to the great poverty narrative as there are lines in the sidewalks upon which they stand and sit and lay. Where they paint, draw, dance, sing.

You say "they" a lot, too.

Choices

All these shades of creativity. A dreadlocked waif wearing a frayed sari tells you where each of the stones and bits of glass that adorn her handmade jewelry comes from. There's an infant sleeping in a sling on her back. You smell the top of your own baby's head and vow never to bury the talents you've been given.

You feel guilty as you walk away. Perhaps because you didn't buy anything.

You think about choices. The choice to sell art. The choice to beg. The street as a lifestyle option. Having worked downtown, you know some of these faces, know that there are homes they could return to. But you know about addiction, mental illness, prostitution and circumstance, too, the choices that would get made if only they weren't so hard to hold.

But it isn't so bad, is it? You've travelled, you've seen the slums in Vietnam, India and China, and you wonder what the street urchin born into true destitution would think about all of this. What they would sacrifice to get themselves out, weighed against a choice to live on the street.

So you judge. You might feel bad about it.

What to give

You know the refrain: never give money; it just acts as an enabler. You never know where it will end up, which affliction it will feed. There are places in the world where enterprising slum lords take homeless newborns and maim them with box-cutters to increase the pity factor – more revenue when the child grows into his disfigurement and is forced to beg. You can't reconcile need against need when that guy asking for two dollars wears designer shoes, can afford canvases and brushes and paint.

Still, you respect the saints who toil with the city's neediest denizens. Such good people, you say, as you pray and pass collection plates in church and call it good. Here at Art Crawl charities rent empty storefronts to sell works of art, the proceeds benefitting the street kids who create them. The air of legitimacy.

You never go inside.

Are you aware of the many ways to savour a hardened heart? Call it justification or reasoned counterpoint or good governance or the proper distribution of wealth. You talk about the freedom to speak, to succeed, to be anything. Then you quote Bible passages like the one that speaks about "the least of these" and the neighbours we're supposed to love, but when it comes down to it, you tend to think more about how uncomfortably small the eye of that needle really is.

Later, safe at home, you feel bad again. And pray, maybe.

Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. with their first child. To find out more about Brent and his writing, visit brentvans.com.

God expresses himself in summer's bounty.

Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer

Ten thousand places

In spite of myself, in spite of what's going on in my life, giddiness rises whenever I find myself outdoors under the bright June sun. Even passing through the countryside in my car – ditches a tangle of phlox and vetch and bowing grasses, forests dense where undergrowth meets branch, birds crying from every bough and looping low over the road in their joy – the abundance of it, the sheer proliferation of life, catches in my throat like a sob. The baby whoops from the back seat: "Wow! Wow!" She sees it too, the gift that just doesn't stop unfolding, the endless variations of summer's bounty.

God expresses himself in this rich variety. No single part of creation is the image-bearer; together, in all our diversity, we are still little more than a reflection in a dark glass, dimly evincing the glory that is coming. Eighteenth century poet and Jesuit priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins, constantly described God's identity as expressed in nature. In one of his most famous poems, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," he wrote, ". . . For Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men's faces." He saw "inscape" in the created world, the singular essence of each living thing that expressed a small part of the Creator. "Glory be to God for dappled things – For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow; / For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim. . . ." When the whole of the English language was too limited to describe these hints of God, he bent the meanings of words or joined disparate words to make new meanings. And even as it bursts the conventions of language, his poetry has an urgency, a straining toward something that can't quite be captured. When I read it, I feel the same overwhelming abundance as I do on my June drives.

Little walls

This abundant diversity is also found in the human world, but I am so much less enthusiastic about it. Why don't I encounter human differences with the same expectation of latent glory I have in nature? When my traditions are challenged by a changing population, I become uncomfortable. When someone's ideas differ from mine, estrangement creeps into the relationship. When I see in myself a failure to measure up to standards of success or beauty or competency, I feel inadequate deep in my bones. In parenthood, developmental benchmarks become sources of fear: my child isn't sitting up yet at six months or walking at 12. He is only in the 20th percentile for weight. She is almost 2 and hardly saying a word. Intermingled with the desire for our children's healthy growth is also a nagging fear of difference: we want our kids to be "normal," to be like the others, not to stand out too much.

Our categories and benchmarks are ways of making sense of the world, but they are also attempts to control it. I don't plan to classify and evaluate and build little walls around what is acceptable and what is just wrong, but I do. Whether these categories take on racial or gender-based or socio-economic prejudices is almost unimportant: the point is that there is always something different with which we must contend. This variety often makes us feel threatened, as if we are losing mastery over our little corner of the universe, even if we know mastery is really just an illusion.

I want to set out on a new path, to encounter the gorgeous variety in humanity with eagerness, to catch in it hints of God. I want to see in the differences among us revelations of inscape, revelations of our Father's face. If I truly believe that God is in control of this planet, I must inch toward letting go of my attempts at control, bit by bit, and rejoice in the infinite variety that challenges and changes me. Perhaps I can learn to see it as a gift, to whoop "Wow!" as it passes by. Let me, with Hopkins, offer praise for all of life, to see in ten thousand places pieces of one great Image.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled, (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him. (G.M. Hopkins)

Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She is suffering, but persisting, through Carol Anshaw's novel, Carry the One.

Columns

Summer rain refreshes; it's not an inconvenience.

Country Living
Meindert Vander Galien

Newsflash: summer may be hot

Most evenings I watch the first 20 minutes of the 6 o'clock news out of Ottawa. That's where our local news and weather forecasts come from – 100 km away. The other night the weatherman said "there is a 40 percent chance of a thundershower tomorrow, so you might want to take an umbrella along." Ahhh! There are times I take a break from watching the news, or rather, the so-called news. On slow news days television stations spend a large segment of their news time with silly happenings, or they give viewers tips on, for example, how to cope with hot and humid summer weather or cold winter weather. A reporter might interview the medical officer of health about what people can do to alleviate the heat. Don't you hate it when your intelligence is insulted like that?

Last summer an Ottawa doctor, working in the emergency department of a local hospital, was interviewed for the news story. The doctor stood outside in the sun wearing a green smock over his clothes, and was peppered with questions about hot weather as if this was the first time we've experienced this kind of heat. He was asked if there were more people coming to the ER than on a normal day.

The doctor looked a little sheepish and said, "a few more."

He was asked how people should deal with the hot weather. It did make me chuckle – some example he was setting with a smock over his clothes. The original layered look!

Expert advice

Hot, sticky summer days are normal and predictable. Nate King Cole sang about them when I was a youngster in 1963 – *Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.* There were no ceiling fans and air conditioners when I was a kid. Kids have always cooled off in water or had fun at the beach.

I agree that the heat can be extreme and do empathize for the elderly and the ill. When I grew up, the elderly folks wore dark and long sleeved clothing. Most of the men wore long underwear all year round – another layered look! The thinking back then was what keeps the cold out also keeps the heat out. There are still men around today who wear long johns in the summer regardless of the temperature. They should be interviewed for the supper hour news – a few elderly men sitting in the shade under an old oak tree, sporting long johns under trousers. And sipping hot cups of tea. Wouldn't that make a more interesting story? And a nice change from seeing young folks at a beach playing ball or lying on beach towels.

Babied by the news

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not advocating wearing long underwear in the summer. The old timers wore the stuff and they did mostly hard manual labour. Go figure that out!

But seriously, do the news media take us for a bunch of dummies or do they think we need to be pampered? Do any of us turn on the TV news on a sweltering day to find out from some expert how to handle the heat? Stay cool by drinking lots of fluids and don't exert yourself. Stay in the shade if you can. Simple!

What about people who have to work in all kinds of weather? Fruit pickers, roofers, construction crews, pavers, factory workers, dry cleaners, bakers, dairy farmers milking sweaty cows, farmers stacking hay on the wagon or mow, just to mention a few.

Radio personalities also like to advise their listeners to take along an umbrella when there's a 30 percent chance of showers late in the afternoon. Can't we think for ourselves? What's wrong with getting a little wet on a hot summer day? It'll dry off.

It was raining quite hard when I was stopped for traffic in a little town last week at around 4 p.m. and saw a young woman in a dress walking a quick pace in the rain. She was probably finished her shift and walking home. She could have easily ducked under some big trees along the way, but she kept on walking. What a refreshing sight!

Meindert van der Galien has three big gardens (two in potatoes) this summer and was happy with all the June rains.

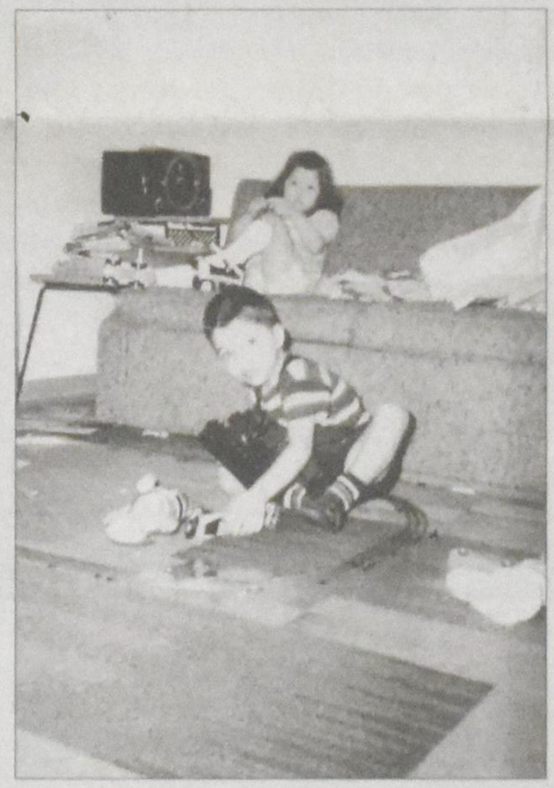
Principalities & Powers
David Koyzis

What's in a (sur)name?

One Sunday morning some 25 years ago, I walked into a local Christian Reformed Church congregation in Hamilton and was greeted at the door by an elderly man who welcomed me. I announced my name, and a quizzical look came to his face. "Eh? Kooistra?" he inquired with an obvious accent. Close enough. I didn't try to correct his obvious confusion of Grecian and Frisian.

Ever since I began my association with the Dutch-Canadian community I have heard the tale of how, in 1811, Napoléon's army swept into the Netherlands and required everyone to adopt a surname. Assuming it was only a fad that would quickly pass once the French went home, the story has it that many of the Dutch treated surnames as a joke and adopted humorous monikers like Uittenbroek ("out of his pants") and Pekelharing ("pickled herring"). The French did indeed return from whence they came, but the surnames stuck for good.

In my father's native island of Cyprus surnames are of much more recent vintage. In fact, my father was born with only a patronymic, his full given name being Theodoros Antoniou, or Theodore (son) of Anthony, my grandfather's first name. When he started an English-language school nearly seven decades ago, the authorities wanted everyone to have a first, middle and last name, so my father chose his grandfather's name, whose origin is unclear. Family lore has it that it was originally a French name, perhaps Coizy, a name associated with a bottler of sparkling wines in the Champagne region of France. In Greek it would have been Κοϊζής, or *KoiZÊS*, but, with the help of a teacher, my father came up with *Koyzis*. I was thus very likely the first person on earth to be born with the name.



David as a boy, playing with trains: the first Koyzis born with that name.

Origins

It is not surprising then that, when I was growing up, I didn't even know the surnames of many relatives on the paternal side, because surnames were not regarded as terribly important. Not so, obviously, on this side of the pond.

Most European surnames have one of three possible origins: patronymics (e.g., Johnson, Anderson, Peterson), occupations (e.g., Baker, Cooper, Carter), or places of origin (e.g., Lincoln, Montgomery, Sinclair). Many names are easily traced to these origins, but not ours. There is a French village near Lyon called Coise, which, if a connection could be shown, would indicate a place-name origin.

However, one commentator on a genealogical website insisted that our name is Turkish in provenance. *Kuyu* means *well*, which would make our ancestors well-diggers. But the word *köy* means *village*, and *koy* means *inlet*, which takes us back to place names again. Not that any of this will matter over the long term, because there are no male heirs in the younger generation to carry it on. Barring the unforeseen, the name Koyzis will eventually die out.

Named

The catechism in the Book of Common Prayer begins, not with our only comfort, but with these words: "What is your Name?" Subsequent questions and answers draw the connection between our name and baptism, "wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Acts 11:26 tells us that "in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians," a name apparently given them by others.

It is perhaps appropriate that, despite our society's valorization of personal choice for its own sake, our names are given us at birth and are not chosen by us. Indeed there is an integral relationship between our given names and the free grace of God given us in salvation. We cannot choose to be saved any more than we can choose our own names. I was baptized in the name of the triune God by believing parents who promised to raise me under the name of Christ.

In this I find great comfort. Even if my surname does die out, I know that the name of Christ, which is mine by baptism, can never be extinguished.

David T. Koyzis teaches politics at Redeemer University College and is blessed to call himself a Christian.

News

'For such a time as this'

Christian Studies International honours the work of Harro van Brummelen

Adrian and Wendy Helleman

The smile on Harro's face says it all. And there was certainly something to smile about! Almost eight months had passed since Harro Van Brummelen learned of a serious aggressive cancer invading his body. At the time he was given only a few weeks, or perhaps a few months with chemo and radiation treatments. Those months have passed; since April, Harro has enjoyed a welcome reprieve from the relentless parade of hospital visits.

Harro has devoted his entire professional life to the cause of Christian education. He is the author of the widely acclaimed *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Learning and Teaching*. This book appeared in a third edition in 2009, and has been translated into many languages (including French, Korean, Russian and Spanish).

Since the fall of 2009, when he retired from his teaching career at Trinity Western University (Langley BC), Harro took on the position of executive director for Christian Studies International (CSI). But by September of 2012 his medical condition forced him to resign, much sooner than he had hoped. That resignation did not prevent him giving vital support in CSI's transition to a new executive director.

Celebration

How to thank Harro properly for his contribution to CSI? We invited his friends and colleagues to an evening of celebration! It is true, when we began planning for the event (for June 1) we were not altogether sure that Harro would even be with us, or be well enough to attend. In God's grace, Harro was able to come.

The evening was a celebration of Harro's contributions to Christian education.

At New Westminster CRC of Burnaby, B.C., pastor Andrew Beunk introduced the evening with a thoughtful and sensitive reading of the passage on which the theme of the evening was based, Esther 4.14, "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

Opening welcome remarks by John Wood, Dean of the Natural Sciences at the King's University College, and board member for CSI, were followed up by Adrian Helleman, who reflected on almost 20 years working through CSI in Russia and Africa. Adrian also accented the timeliness of this organization in pursuing opportunities where it is possible to teach from an integral Christian perspective at universities overseas. The audience was given a nearly "live" encounter with such a teaching experience through a short video of Stephen Ney, CSI professor at the University of the Gambia, who introduced us to the campus, and to some of the students studying the African classic, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Contributions

Subsequent presentations by Henry Contant, Executive Director of the Society of Christian Schools of BC, and Kimberly Franklin, Associate Professor and Dean of the School of Education at Trinity Western University, reinforced the "timeliness" of Harro's contribution to Christian education over the span of his career, whether with the Society of Christian Schools of BC, or in teaching and advocacy work for Trinity Western University, respectively. Franklin described how much she learned from Van Brummelen as a student of education, and how he continues to impact the university even after his retirement. Contant focused on the significant changes experienced by Christian schools in BC during the time when Harro worked for the Society. This theme was echoed by Fred Herfst, former executive director of the Federation of Independent Schools Associations of BC, in his concluding remarks on the funding of BC Christian schools as an achievement which owes much to the efforts of Harro Van Brummelen.

Legacy

In her presentation on the role of CSI in the larger spectrum of Christian education, Wendy Helleman returned to the theme of timeliness of the academic mission of CSI, comparing this with the historic role of the Jesuit order in establishing Christian universities noted for dedication to high standards. She appealed to Christian scholars to give serious consideration to the invitation of universities overseas where there is such a need in the context of an explosive expansion of education at the tertiary levels. She presented education as a valid form of mission in the contemporary post-colonial context. And finally she reflected on a well-known reality in graduate education in North America, where openings for graduates with a doctorate are few and far between and the competition for scarce openings is fierce. In this context CSI presents Christian graduates with a real option to go where they can find satisfaction in service to our Lord.

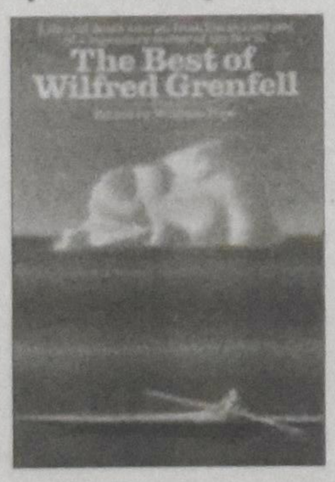
The highlight of the evening came with the gift for Harro: the work on *The Gospels and Acts* of the magnificently written and illuminated St. John's manuscript Bible. CSI also took this occasion to announce the "Harro Van Brummelen International Scholars Fund," as one way that those who have valued Harro's work can help to leave a legacy in his name. Its goal is to raise financial support for new appointees to CSI to help them in their initial year of service overseas.

Since 1995, Adrian and Wendy Helleman have served in Russia and Africa with CSI. Now semi-retired, they are still involved with the Christian Religious Studies program at the University of the Gambia. Due to Harro's illness, Wendy has served as Acting Executive Director for CSI since January 2013.

Email csidesk@gmail.com for information on contributing to the "Harro Van Brummelen International Scholars Fund."

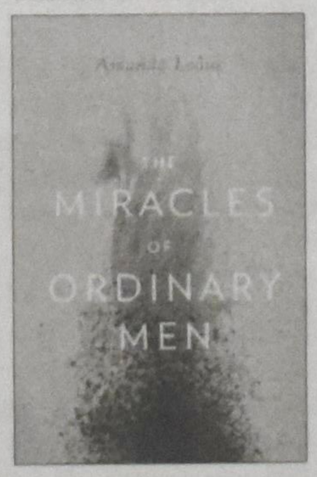
Summer reading recommendations

Bert Witvoet recommends:
The Grenfell I Knew
by **Alex A. Smith**
The Best of Wilfred Grenfell edited by William Pope



Grenfell grew up in an English fishing village and crossed the ocean in 1892 to work among the fishing folk in Newfoundland and Labrador as a medical missionary. For six months of the year Arctic ice blocked the waters around these villages. There were no roads connecting the 200 outports he served. The diet was sparse: fish, bread and molasses. But the people Grenfell served "possessed a strong faith that saw them through the bitter experiences of life." I am inspired by the wholistic view that motivated Dr. Grenfell: following Christ must be expressed primarily in deed ministry. He lived by the verse his mother quoted as a blessing upon his departure from England: "Teach me today the thing that pleases thee."

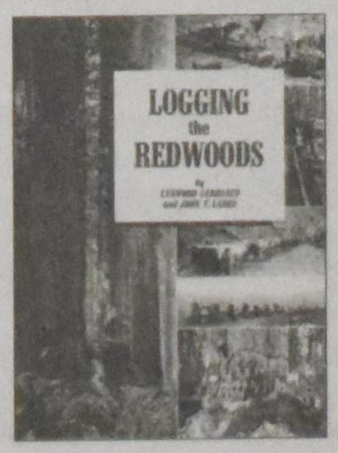
Brent Van Staalduinen recommends:
The Miracles of Ordinary Men by **Amanda Leduc**



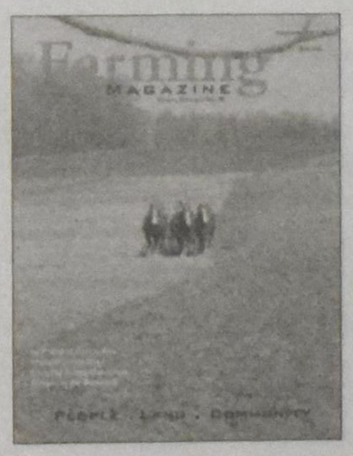
Sam, a troubled high school teacher, wakes up to discover he has wings. Delilah, adrift in her career and personal life, seeks the illicit attention of her domineering boss. Both characters embark upon hard journeys of self-discovery, looking for answers about God, death and family, answers that are rarely self-evident and often painful. In a strong debut, Leduc challenges our preconceptions about faith and loss: are Sam and Delilah's burdens ours too, even when we think no one else can see them?

Meindert van der Galien recommends:
Logging the Redwoods by **Lynwood Carranco and John T. Labbe**

When gold was discovered in California in 1848, the demand for lumber (and its price) soared. This book is loaded with incredible photos from that time: logs of unbelievable size – 13 to 19 feet in diameter cut from 300 ft tall trees. Men split the largest redwood logs with black powder. One tree has a base diameter of 32.2 feet. The authors estimate it is 3,600 years old and the biggest tree on earth.



Curt Gesch recommends:
Farming Magazine: "People, land and community"



This magazine is produced by people who love farming and living on a "small and ecologically conscious scale." It illustrates that it is possible to live an alternative life to what is promoted by big agriculture, suburban fragmented culture and the harassment of materialism. Back issues can be ordered from **farmingmagazine.net.**

More great books to check out on p.20

Classifieds

Anniversaries

1953 July 23 2013

With thanksgiving to God, we celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of

Stan and Dorothy Antonides (nee Schenk)

With love from our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Elizabth & Palle
Anna & Henry
Belinda & Don

Address: 602 - 35 Kingknoll Dr.
Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

Birthday

Happy 90th Birthday

Mary Groenewegen

July 23, 2013 D.V.
May the Lord, we pray, continue to bless you, mom!
Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

John & Nell Jansen
Sheryl & Doug Philip
Lauren, Brandon
Ken & Junko Jansen
Janice Jansen & Tony Defina
Christian, Jesse
Trish & Steve Spagnolo
Elliot

Harry & Jeanette Groenewegen
Erin & Brandon Brodie
Rylan, Kaden, Aliya
Sandi & Mike Tigchelaar
Ezra, Kalem, Denver
Tim & Wendy Groenewegen
Karrington
Lindsay & Nick Lenos
Camden

Betty & Georg De Boer
Kevin & Jenny De Boer
Ali, Paige
Lindsay De Boer & Travis Thin
Travis & Tanya De Boer
Jaxen, Mason

Annette & Don Clarke
Sean, Courtenay, Ashley

Neil & Kelly Groenewegen
Rachel, Emily, Anna

"My presence shall go with thee."
Exodus 33:14

Correspondence: N. Groenewegen
25 MarcelPlace
Hamilton ON L9B 1W2

The correspondence address for the Vanderburg anniversary announcement in the June 24 issue is:

Herman and Betty Vanderburg
6320 Crowchild Tr. SW
Calgary AB T3E 5R5

Thanking God for His many blessings, the family of

Jack and Joanne Koetsier

Invite you to join in celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary with an

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, July 20, 2013, from 2-4 pm
at their home
8199 Concession 3
Listowel, Ontario

Best Wishes Only Please

1953 - July 16 - 2013

Evert and Klaziena Wassink

With thankfulness to God
we hope to celebrate our parent's
60th wedding anniversary.

Connie and Francis - Woodstock, Ont.
John and Carol - Leduc, Alta.
Diana and Bill - Sarnia, Ont.
Margaret and Albert - Wayland, Mich.
Dick and Janette - Forest, Ont.
Clarence and Alice - Dorchester, Ont.
Otto and Gracia - Drumbo, Ont.
Evelyn and Henry - Dorchester, Ont.
Arno and Kathy - New Dundee, Ont.
Along with 35 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren

An **Open house** will be held on
Sat July 20 from 2-5 pm at
St Christopher Parish Hall
68 Union Street, Forest ON NON 1J0

Address: 6894 Brush Road
Plympton-Wyoming ON NON 1J5

1963 July 13 2013
50th Wedding Anniversary D.V. of

G. John Kleinikkink and Sheila (nee Smart)

We praise God for His faithfulness.

Family;
Elaine Kleinikkink – Orillia
Michael & Hannah Conroy
Albert Kleinikkink & Sheryl Dedman – Kitchener
Adrian & Amanda
Ed & Pauline Vander Velde – Freelton
Justin, Jacob, & Jillian
Stanley Kleinikkink & Melinda Paas – Kitchener
Ethan & Trevor

Address 5616 County Road 15
Alliston ON L9R1V3
Email: jklein@sympatico.ca

July 1, 1963

Thankful for God's grace and faithfulness in our lives, the family of

Case and Pauline VanNoord (nee Antonides)

would like to announce their 50th wedding anniversary on July 1, 2013 DV

Tony and Ruth Ann Kamphuis (Smithville)
Calvin, John and Alexandra
Jeff and Debra Vandermeer (Simcoe)
Elly and Hendrik
Dave and Anita Arnold (Ingersoll)
Jim and Christine Soultanidis (Toronto)
Seth and Petra
Ed and Jodi VanNoord (Kitchener)
Miah, Ben and Luke
Mark VanNoord (Hamilton)
Tanya VanNoord (Saudi Arabia)

Open House at:
Oxford Reformed Christian School
333182 Plank Line Rd (Hwy 19) Mt. Elgin Ont.
July 20, 2013 2:00-5:00pm

With praise and thanksgiving to God, the family of

Bill and Wilma VanHuizen (nee Hogeterp)

announce their 50th anniversary on July 12, 2013.

We are thankful to celebrate God's faithfulness in your lives, and your love and faithfulness to each other and to your family.

With all our love and best wishes.
Roberta & Ben Luttjeboer
Josiah & Rachel (Isaac Benjamin †2012), Jared, Paul, Jessica
Yvonne & Terry Veldboom
Kirsten & James Prinsen, Brittany, Jocelynne, Gabrielle, Erin
Dianne & Keith VanAlthuis
Erica, Jacob, Meghan, Madison
Ray and Nicole VanHuizen
Owen, Ethan, Lauren, Evan
Richard & Cindy VanHuizen
Samantha

Address: 4893 Victoria Avenue,
Vineland Station ON L0R 2E0

Obituaries

On Sat. June 15, 2013

Jakob Geert (Jack) Fokkens

went home to be with his Lord.
Jack was born in Ter Apel, Groningen, The Netherlands on Sept. 25, 1931 and immigrated to Canada with his family in September 1952.

"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."
Psalm 100:5

Beloved husband of Janna (Jane) Fokkens (nee Deboer) for 56 years.

Dear father of:
Henriette & Paul Thompson – Georgetown, Ont.
Janet & John Geertsema – Barrie, Ont.
John & Karen Fokkens – Telkwa, B.C.
Karen & Andrew DeBeer – Barrie, Ont.
Ingrid & David Flikkema – Brampton, Ont.
He will be missed by his 17 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Funeral service was held on Wed. June 19, 2013, at the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church. Pastor Henk Bruinsma officiated. Interment followed at Greenwood Cemetery in Georgetown, Ont.

Correspondence address: Jane Fokkens
405 - 45 Kingknoll Dr.
Brampton, ON L6Y 5P2

16 February 1914 Meerkerk — 26 June 2013 Brampton

Dirk Pieter Jongkind

With thankfulness to God for a life of 99 years filled with love, happiness and an unwavering faith, the earthly journey for Dirk Pieter Jongkind – Husband, Father, Opa, and Great-Grandfather is over.

We his children: Nenke & Rob, Jake & Marion, Ernie & Adriana, Adam & Judy, Scott & Marisa, Judy & Alan Bennink, his Grandchildren, Great-grandchildren and his wife of almost 69 years, Hendrika (Rie), grieve, but also celebrate his life. We remembered his life on Saturday, June 29.

Anyone wishing to remember Dirk can send a card to:
Rie Jongkind
105 - 7940 McLaughlin Rd. S, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

Family contact:
Nenke Jongkind
6 - 9 Inkerman Street, Toronto ON M4Y 1M5

If desired, donations in recognition of a life well lived may be forwarded to:
The Lighthouse or to Holland Christian Homes.

Classifieds/ Advertising

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Fax: 905-774-0632

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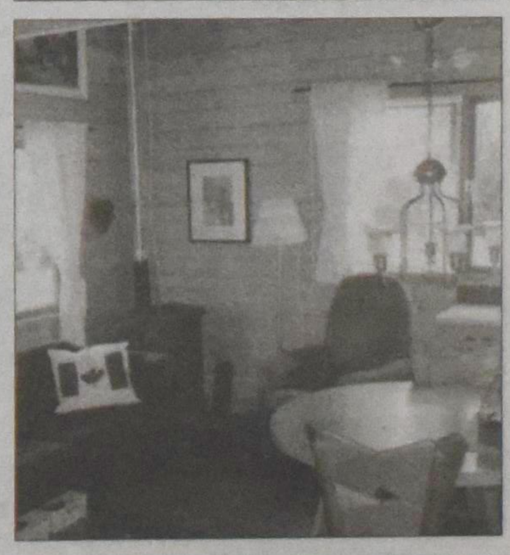

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 28 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching. DVDs are available.

Oct 5-6 Maranatha CRC in **Belleville**, Ont. will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a BBQ and open house, banquet. Celebration service Sunday morning. For details, see ad next issue or contact the church at 613-962-2062 ext. 200 or email info@maranatha-church.com.

Oct 31-Nov 2 Andreas Center Conference. Dordt College. More info at: www.dordt.edu/events/conference2013/

Voortman

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Rosanne van der Woerd
109-3260 New St.
Burlington ON L7N 3L4
905-681-0311 Email:
rvanderwoerd@gmail.com

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Billy and Ted . . . *continued from p.12*

He had kept a blog in which he openly wrote of his struggles with depression and the challenges of being an openly gay teenager. What if one of these had been your or my child?

I am in correspondence with Gary and Joe, two former grade school students of mine. Gary has a Presbyterian background; Joe came from a CRC family. Both came out during their high school years. Gary left for the eastern U.S., and currently is in a monogamous relationship with another male. Joe's father was so profoundly disturbed about his son's homosexuality that he contacted a pastor of a nearby non-CRC church and arranged for Gary to undergo an exorcism rite. Gary got so upset about this demon out-casting experience that he left home, moved to another part of the country and even changed his name.

Each of these stories is a story of lost hope, lost faith and, in two cases, lost lives. Pastors know much about such situations, for they regularly deal with those trying to come to grips with their sexual identity – they can put a face on the people struggling with this. "It is only then," one pastor confided, "that you will begin to accept the homosexual for what she or he is. It is when one encounters the individual in a person to person situation that their pain and agony become so clearly evident."

What we believe

Then there is the matter of homosexual couples desiring to get married. It is an odd thing: many heterosexual couples prefer to live common law, yet gay couples organize protest marches to gain the right to marry! Homosexual couples can live in deeply committed relationships, adopt children and live a good life. They usually are faithful and loving to each other in ways that frequently are exemplary and genuinely positive. It is true that homosexuality is often adversely affected by the so-called Gay Parades, which are repugnant to many. Of course it is equally difficult to be positive about the spectacle and drunken revelry of the heterosexual Mardi Gras parades of New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro and here in Canada.

In 1973 the CRCNA Synod declared that we must love the homosexual, but not endorse the homosexual lifestyle. The decision gave birth to the glib, "We must love the sinner, but hate the sin," with the explanation of how to do that remaining stuck in the mists of argument.

And so the difficulty continues. The longer a person thinks and talks a certain way, the longer it takes for that person to change. Once he held a view; now the view holds him. . . .

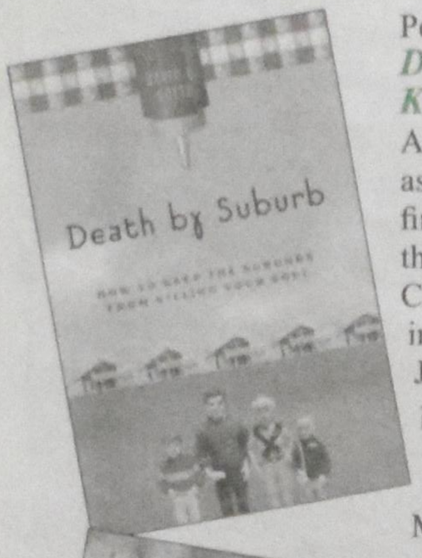
Yet, as always, hope remains. Again listen to the indefatigable cleric of confidence, Rev. H. Kuperus: "*I believe that my church someday will have the courage to fully affirm all her children.*"

Frank DeVries (fransencea@shaw.ca) served as principal and teacher at Ontario and B.C. Christian schools. He and his wife Celia make their home in Abbotsford, BC, where they attend Gateway Christian Reformed Church; they recently celebrated their 60th anniversary. *A number of names in this article have been changed to provide anonymity.*

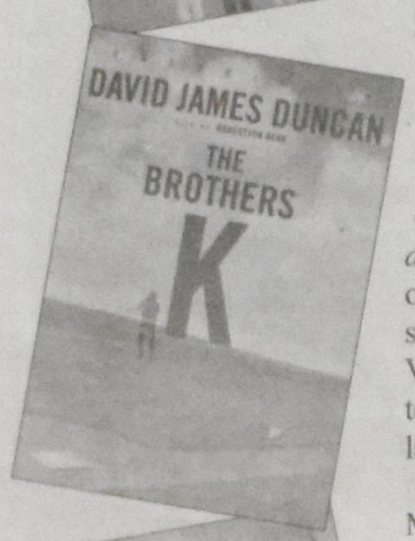
Features

Summer reading recommendations

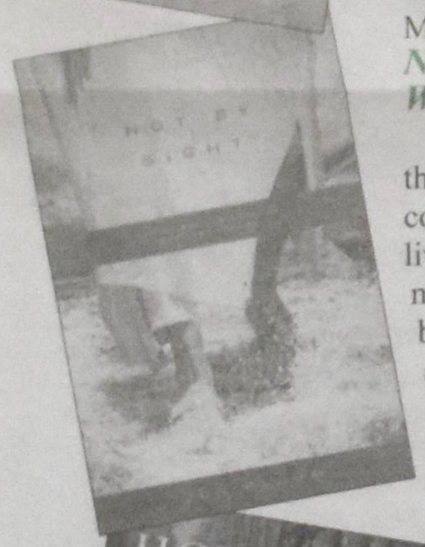
A long summer evening is the perfect time to crack open a new book. If you're still hunting for just the right one to pack for the beach, cottage or campground, we asked *Christian Courier's* staff for recent favourites. Here's what they came up with:



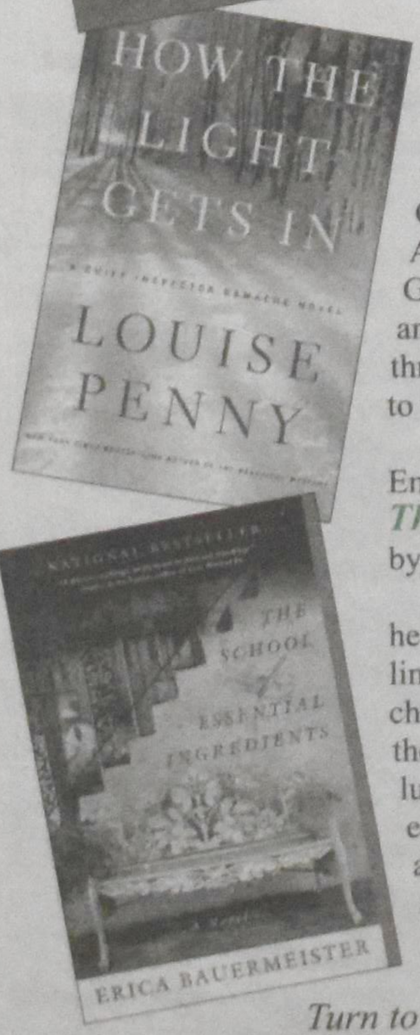
Peter Schuurman recommends:
Death by Suburb: How to Keep the Suburbs From Killing Your Soul by **David L. Goetz**
As a young adult, I always imagined the Christian life as something radically, heroically sacrificial, and I now find myself comfortably nestled in a subdivision near the Christian school. Goetz, self-employed in affluent Chicago, critiques the "bloated soul" of suburbia but also insists "I don't need to escape the suburbs. I need to find Jesus here." A thoughtful book that explores the disciplines of a "thicker life" in the midst of ordinary middle-class family routines.



Michael Buma recommends:
The Brothers K by **David James Duncan**
The Brothers K is one of the most profound and engaging novels I've ever read. It's a worthy American answer to *The Brothers Karamazov* (the greatest novel ever written as far as I'm concerned), and a sort of *Franny and Zooey* for adults. The story is ultimately a meditation on faith and family, filtered through a diverse array of lenses such as baseball, philosophy, Russian literature and the Vietnam War, but this brief description hardly does justice to the novel's affable profundity, superb characterizations, laugh-out-loud humour and empathetic charm.



Marian Van Til recommends:
Not by Sight: A Fresh Look at Old Stories of Walking by Faith by **Jon Bloom**
Bloom has a blessed knack for distilling truths from the biblical stories he presents, and a talent for telling the compelling stories of the biblical men and women whose lives reveal encounters with that Truth. I have this book on my Kindle. I dip into it and re-dip into it frequently. I've bought a few copies for people who I know will appreciate it and find it helpful. It's that kind of book. Bloom is the president of Desiring God, which he and John Piper founded in 1994.

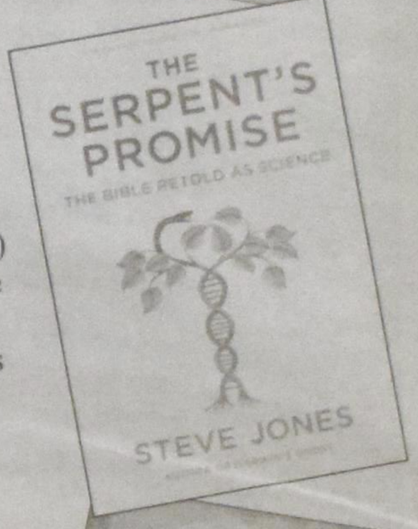


Julia Stronks recommends:
How the Light Gets In by **Louise Penny**
This mystery series featuring Anglos living near Quebec weaves history into each murder investigation. I've learned about Gregorian chants, Samuel de Champlain and art as I've come to know Inspector Armand Gamache of the Surete' du Quebec and his team. Gamache has a thorough understanding of human frailty and themes of redemption and reconciliation are threaded throughout the stories. Start with *Still Life* (2008) and get to know the complex characters of Three Pines, Montreal.

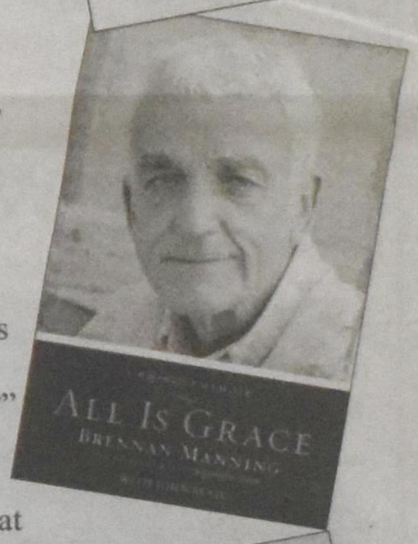
Emily Cramer recommends:
The School of Essential Ingredients
by **Erica Bauermeister**
This is a perfect novel to toss in your beach bag as you head outdoors. It tells the stories of a number of characters linked by a cooking class, each chapter focusing on one character and culminating at Lillian's restaurant during the weekly lesson. The novel hinges on the richness and luxury of good food and how the rituals of cooking and eating affect our lives. Bauermeister's characters are likable, her writing is beautifully descriptive and sensory, and her atmosphere is light without being naive.

Turn to page 16 for more great suggestions.

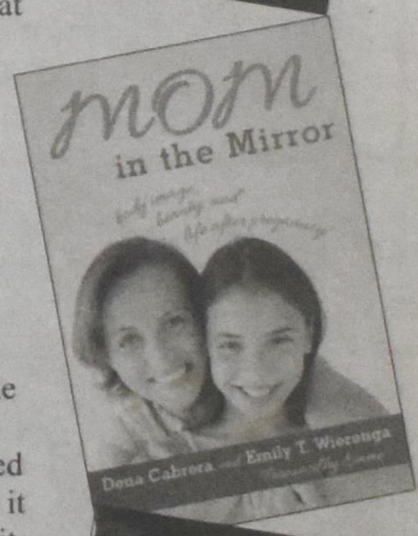
Angela Reitsma Bick recommends:
Gold by **Chris Cleave**
Meet Zoe and Kate, rival world-champion cyclists (and friends); Jack, Kate's husband; and Sophie, their daughter, battling childhood leukemia. Free from the political heaviness of *Little Bee* (2008) but written with the same skill, Cleave merges drama and tragedy so deftly in *Gold* that his occasional bouts of sentimentality are excused. He hands out plot twists like candy and mines the juxtaposition of sport and cancer deeply. In *Gold,* "caring for sick children is the Olympics of parenting," though you won't win a medal for it.



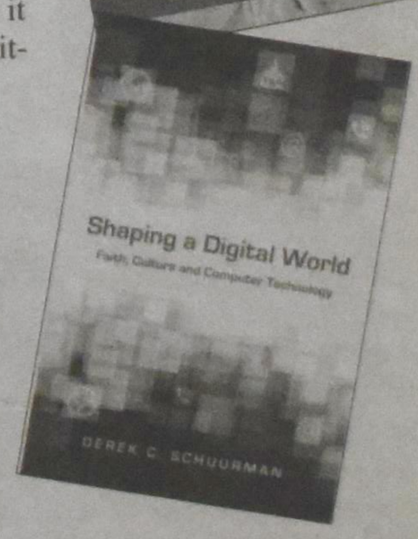
Rudy Eikelboom recommends:
The Serpent's Promise: The Bible Retold as Science by **Steve Jones**
The author argues that religion provides an early, failed explanation for the big questions and he denies the truth I find in Scripture. He sees scientific answers replacing religious ones. This book (I'm half-way through) provokes me in a way that expands my faith and how I see the truth of Scriptures, bringing modern science (with the limits that Jones notes) to bear on questions that Christians need to explore. A well-written science book for believers not frightened by challenges to their faith.



Cathy Smith recommends:
All Is Grace by **Brennan Manning**
Manning passed away on my birthday, April 12, 2013, before I'd read even one of his books. So I started at the end . . . with his memoir. His editor John Blase wrote, "some not so funny things happened to Brennan on the way to his memoir, things like a scrape with depression and a relapse into drinking and suffering a few falls resulting in broken shoulders and ribs, the kinds of things that make a man ask why would anybody want to read a book about my life, especially now, the way it is ending?"
The book poignantly encapsulates Manning's reiterated message: God loves us the way *we are*. The line that got me: "It's not that I hold that belief so much as that belief holds me."



Last but not least – our own writers!
CC recommends two books published by our columnists this year:
Mom in the Mirror: Body Image, Beauty and Life After Pregnancy
by **Dena Cabrera** and **Emily Wierenga**
This book gives "an authentic and powerful look at the emotions and issues attached to childbirth. [It] isn't your typical self-help book, but rather feels like a much-needed conversation with a very good friend. Whether we know it or not, *Mom in the Mirror* is the book we've all been waiting for." — Courtney Walsh, author



Shaping a Digital World: Faith, Culture and Computer Technology by **Derek Schuurman**
"The little machines we now hold in our hands are not neutral. We make them, but they mold us. This book is an invitation to first recognize this and then think through its implications." — James K.A. Smith, Calvin College